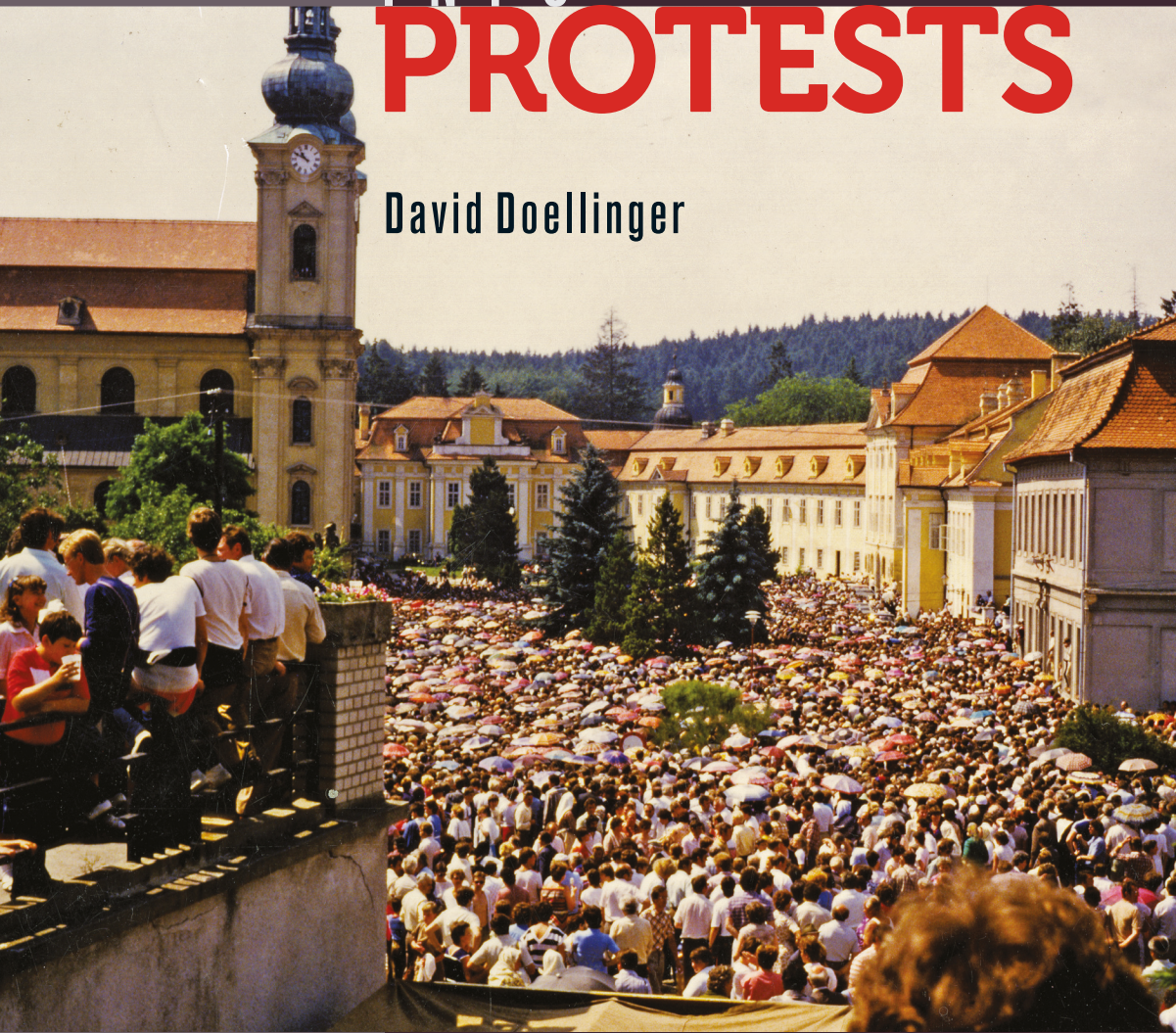


# TURNING PRAYERS INTO PROTESTS

David Doellinger



Religious-Based Activism and its Challenge to  
State Power in Socialist Slovakia and East Germany

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its Challenge to State Power  
in Socialist Slovakia and East Germany**

**David Doellinger**

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*For Erin, Henry and Olive  
& the promise of “one more day”*





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Monmouth, Oregon  
April 2013

# Abbreviations

|      |                                                                                                |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AG   | Arbeitsgruppe (Working Group)                                                                  |
| AK   | Arbeitskreis (Working Circle)                                                                  |
| CSCE | Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe                                               |
| CSR  | Czech Socialist Republic                                                                       |
| CSSR | Czechoslovak Socialist Republic                                                                |
| EKD  | Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands (Evangelical Church of Germany)                               |
| GDR  | German Democratic Republic, also East Germany                                                  |
| HOS  | Hnutie za občiansku slobodu (Movement for Civic Freedoms)                                      |
| HZDS | Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko (Movement for a Democratic Slovakia)                          |
| IG   | Initiativegruppe (Initiative Group)                                                            |
| IM   | inoffizieller Mitarbeiter (informal collaborator of the Stasi)                                 |
| KDH  | Kresťansko-Demokratické Hnutie (Christian Democratic Movement)                                 |
| KDS  | Konzervatívni Demokrati Slovenska (Conservative Democrats of Slovakia)                         |
| KOR  | Komitet Obrony Robotników (Committee for the Defense of Workers)                               |
| NVA  | Nationale Volksarmee (National People's Army)                                                  |
| SDK  | Slovak Democratic Coalition                                                                    |
| SED  | Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party)                             |
| SNP  | Slovak National Uprising                                                                       |
| SSR  | Slovak Socialist Republic                                                                      |
| VONS | Výbor na Obranu Nespravedlivé Stíhaných (Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted) |
| VPN  | Verejnost' Proti Násiliu (Public Against Violence)                                             |





# Introduction

In George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the main character Winston Smith discovered that by sitting in the space of a small alcove in his living room, he could escape the gaze of the telescreen and perform the punishable act of writing in his diary.<sup>1</sup> In Orwell's vision of life within a totalitarian state, that alcove represented a small physical space where activities could take place outside of the observation of the "Thought Police" and beyond the power of "Big Brother." As Winston Smith discovered, it was possible to find a physical space for independent action even within an authoritarian system.

Throughout the Soviet bloc, finding an independent space became a challenge as the party-state began a process of extending its control over every element of political, economic, social, and cultural life after 1945. In Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the party-state successfully maintained political power until 1989, although nowhere in East Central Europe did it achieve the efficiency and control of Orwell's 'Thought Police' and 'Big Brother.' This book is a comparative study of two distinct grassroots movements whose sustained challenges to state power successfully expanded spaces for action independent of state control in Socialist Czechoslovakia and the GDR.<sup>2</sup> Challenges to

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<sup>1</sup> Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 7–8.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the content in this book has been published previously. This book expands on my article on the secret church: "Prayers, Pilgrimages and Petitions: The Secret Church and the Growth of Civil Society in Slovakia," *Nationalities Papers* 30, no. 2 (June 2002): 215–240. Content from "The 1985 Pilgrimage at Velehrad: Slovak Catholics and the Creation of a Public Space," *Slovakia* 39, nos 72–73 (2007): 99–116 is reprinted by permission from this scholarly annual. Also, content from my article "Peace through Recon-

state power in both cases came from the religious sphere – from believers, church institutions, religious symbols and adherence to religious traditions. In Slovakia, the development of an underground secret church revealed that the state's efforts to decapitate the official hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia, while quite destructive, did not fully suppress religious belief or its practice among many believers. Slovak Catholics met privately for bible study and worship services that were often led by priests who had been secretly ordained. The secret church co-existed alongside the officially recognized Catholic Church that had fallen under party-state control. The secret church produced an extensive range of underground periodicals and other religious publications that it began using in the 1980s to promote attendance in religious pilgrimages and participation in protests for greater religious freedom. In the GDR, the various currents of an independent peace movement were initiated by believers, often with the support of the Evangelical (Protestant) Church, which had retained much of its autonomy after the Second World War. The Evangelical Church used its resources to sponsor local groups interested in peace, environmentalism and other social issues. Many of these grassroots groups were founded by conscientious objectors and theology students who were interested in reaching a broader audience. In Leipzig, a small group of former conscientious objectors established the weekly prayer-for-peace services that became one of the epicenters of the 1989 revolution.

Until the collapse of Communism, scholarship on opposition and non-state-directed activity in this region had focused on more well-known movements: Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia; the Committee for the Defense of Workers (KOR) and Solidarity in Poland; and the Danube Circle and the democratic opposition in Hungary. With the exception of KOR and Solidarity in Poland, each of these movements was largely organized by and composed of intellectuals and took shape after the 1968 Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia revealed the limits of political reform. The case of Poland has often been viewed as exceptional for several reasons, including the important role of the Catholic Church in supporting social

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ciliation: Aktion Sühnezeichen and the Lutheran Church in the GDR" in *Religion and the Conceptual Boundary in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Thomas Bremer (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) appears with permission according Palgrave Macmillan's reuse policy. Finally, I also discuss the East German conscientious objectors in "Constructing Peace in the GDR: Conscientious Objection and Compromise among East German Christians, 1962–1989" in *Christianity and Modernity in Eastern Europe*, eds. Bruce R. Berglund and Brian Porter-Szücs (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010).

movements. Nowhere else in the Soviet bloc did a religious institution—from bishops to local clergy—enjoy a higher degree of autonomy from state control. In Poland, the mobilization of workers and intellectuals converged in the Solidarity movement with the powerful influence of the Catholic Church and symbols of Polish Catholicism.<sup>3</sup> The election of a Polish Pope in 1978 and his subsequent visits to Poland, where he spoke openly about Poland's religious history and its more recent relationship with Soviet power, significantly strengthened Polish Catholicism and oppositional groups against the party-state. Was the mobilizing role of religion in Poland a unique case? What form might such expressions of independent activity take elsewhere in the Soviet bloc? To what extent did religious beliefs and institutions support such mobilizations in states where religious institutions had less autonomy than the Polish Catholic Church?

My search for such activity began in Slovakia with the discovery of *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)* research reports that described the religious activism of an underground church that became increasingly willing to challenge the state in the 1980s. During the summer of 1996, while researching the organization and activities of the Slovak secret church at the Open Society Archives in Budapest, a friend introduced me to two former Czech dissidents at a reception. When I told them about my research on Slovakia, they shook their heads and declared that there had been no dissidents or independent activism in Slovakia, only in Prague. The memory of that conversation stayed with me as I learned more about the Slovak secret church. My research revealed that the secret church had been quite successful in organizing spiritual activities such as worship, bible studies and choir practice in private apartments. Slovak Catholics had developed an organizational structure linked by an information network and had opposed the party-state's policies in the decades before the 1989 Velvet Revolution. While some of the tactics adopted by the secret church's activists, such as sending signed letters and petitions to the state critical of its religious policies, were comparable to those used by the political opposition in the Czech lands, particularly Charter 77, Slovak Catholics operated in very traditional arenas, such as religious pilgrimages, in order to challenge state power. In terms of dissident activity, the Czech dissidents I spoke with in 1996 were correct; Charter 77 and other vehicles of political opposition had a very limited presence in Slovakia. Yet, other expressions of independent activity had developed that success-

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<sup>3</sup> See Osa, *Solidarity and Contention*; Kubik, *Power of Symbols*; and Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution*.

fully challenged state power in Slovakia. In addition to the activism of the secret church, environmentalists, as Edward Snajdr's research has shown, also developed a strong movement in Slovakia.<sup>4</sup>

Shortly after finishing that initial research project on the secret church, I participated in a sociology seminar that explored the history and theory of social movements. In that course, the discussion of Roger Gould's research on the Paris Commune in 1871 and Doug McAdam's analysis of the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project gave me a new perspective on the important role of networks in mobilization efforts. McAdam's research revealed that ideological commitment was an insufficient factor for a volunteer's willingness to complete the project. Rather, he found "a prior history of activism and integration into supportive networks acts as the structural 'pull' encouraging the individual to make good on his or her strongly held beliefs."<sup>5</sup> Gould used daily battalion reports from the insurgency at the Paris Commune to examine the role that formal and informal social structures had in mobilizations. Gould focused not on the *number* of ties, but on the interplay *between* social ties created by insurgent organizations and pre-existing social networks rooted in Paris neighborhoods. He argues that mobilization does not only rely on existing social ties, but also creates new ties.<sup>6</sup> I began looking at how networks and social ties functioned in the organization of the secret church and the mobilization of Slovak Catholics. That seminar also introduced me to Karl-Dieter Opp and Christiane Gern's analysis of the Monday Demonstrations that followed the weekly prayer-for-peace services in Leipzig, East Germany in the fall of 1989. Attendance at the services rarely rose above double-digits until 1989. An estimated 70,000 people marched in the demonstrations that followed the service on October 7, 1989. Only sixteen days later, on October 23—still more than two weeks from the opening of the Berlin Wall—attendance in the demonstrations was estimated at 300,000. At the time of Opp and Gern's study, theorists had only begun to consider the question of how social movements developed in authoritarian systems. In the current era of social media, the space for planning and announcing oppositional activities exists in cyberspace (i.e., Arab Spring, Occupy movement). In a political system where it was not possible to publicly announce such activities, Opp and Gern argued that the prayer-for-peace services functioned as a "coordinating mechanism" by setting a regular

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<sup>4</sup> Snajdr, *Nature Protests*.

<sup>5</sup> McAdam, "Micromobilization Contexts," 151.

<sup>6</sup> Gould, "Multiple Networks," 716–729.

time and place for a gathering.<sup>7</sup> As attendance at these services grew in the fall of 1989, the crowds spilled beyond the church walls to form mass demonstrations that circled the city every Monday. It was Opp and Gern's research that sparked my interest in the East German case and I could see many parallels between the function of the prayer-for-peace services and the religious pilgrimages in Slovakia. Activists in the secret church, inspired by the election of Pope John Paul II, had used its information networks to publicize the pilgrimages and mobilize Slovak Catholics to attend these traditional events in the 1980s. In both Slovakia and the GDR, a public space had been constructed in an authoritarian state where citizens could meet to express their concerns and criticism's of state policy, while relatively protected from state interference. The sheer size of the crowds at Leipzig's Monday demonstrations provided protection that replaced the protective cover the churches had once offered. Steven Pfaff argues that it was the possibility of emigration ("exit") that brought East German citizens to the mass demonstrations that followed the prayer-for-peace services in Leipzig in the fall of 1989.<sup>8</sup> The emigration issue was not a factor in Czechoslovakia, but the convergence of protests in public spaces by believers and non-believers helped further the loss of the party-state's authority and the success of the Velvet Revolution.

The growth of public expressions of protest by believers and non-believers in both Slovakia and East Germany inspired my interest in a comparative study. Many of the activities that I analyzed from the early 1980s—hiking trips, bike trips, choir practice, meeting in a private apartment for bible study or to discuss social issues—were non-conformist in the context of communist East Europe, but hardly dissident or oppositional. Yet, I found that all of these activities were connected to the protests that emerged at the end of the decade. Social movement theorists have only recently begun to consider the link between collective action in civic events (such as "a rummage sale for a local church, a community breakfast, a local cleanup day") and collective action in protest events that emerge in those same communities.<sup>9</sup> Given the authoritarian context of Slovakia and East Germany, my research showed that collective action within the private sphere functioned as what they would consider collective action in civic events.

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<sup>7</sup> Opp and Gern, "Dissident Groups," 669–677. See also Opp, Voss, and Gern, *Origins of a Spontaneous Revolution*.

<sup>8</sup> Pfaff, *Exit-Voice Dynamics*.

<sup>9</sup> For an explanation of civic events, see Sampson et al, "Civil Society Reconsidered," 685.

The differences between the Slovak and East German cases—ranging from type of faith (Catholic versus Protestant) and nature of church-state relationship to measures of religiosity and type of activism—are all variables that can be evaluated through this comparative study. In Slovakia, where an estimated sixty percent of the population was Roman Catholic prior to 1989, the Catholic secret church was the largest and most active underground religious structure in that state.<sup>10</sup> The GDR, whose borders contained the territory which had been the home of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation, was the only predominantly Protestant country in the Soviet bloc. In the early 1980s, about half of the GDR's 17.3 million people belonged to the Evangelical Church of Germany (Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands, EKD). Primarily Protestant Lutheran, but with a Reformist (Calvinist) wing, the Evangelical Church was the largest religious institution in the state.<sup>11</sup>

The nature of church-state relations varied significantly in each country. The official hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia received the brunt of state repression in the late 1940s and early 1950s and did not recover its autonomy until after the Velvet Revolution. In contrast, the Evangelical Church in the GDR enjoyed a level of institutional autonomy from the party-state rivaled only by the Polish Catholic Church and the Catholic Church in Slovenia and Croatia. Historical differences, diverse religious traditions and different regimes affected and shaped the religious policies introduced throughout East Europe. Sabrina Ramet argues that church-state relations in Communist countries are not relations between two "monoliths." Rather, the same regime may even apply distinct policies toward church bodies within the same country, depending on the institutional links or policies of those religious institutions.<sup>12</sup> As a

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<sup>10</sup> According to this same census in Slovakia: 6.2 percent were Lutheran, 3.4 percent Greek Catholic (referring to those of the Byzantine church in Slovakia), 1.6 percent Calvinist, 0.6 percent Eastern Orthodox, 0.7 percent declared other religions, 9.7 percent declared no religion, and 17.5 percent left the category blank. According to the 1991 census, 60.3 percent of Slovaks were Roman Catholic. For the geographic distribution of these census figures, see Votruba, "The Geography of Slovakia's Religions."

<sup>11</sup> The GDR also had the largest Methodist population in the Soviet bloc, estimated at 35,000. Baptists were estimated at 22,000, and 80,000 people belonged to the New Apostolic Church. Also, 11,000 Seventh Day Adventists were in the GDR. Beeson, *Discretion and Valour*, 195–199. For a confessional breakdown of the GDR through 1990, see Ramet, *Nihil Obstat*, 53–56.

<sup>12</sup> Ramet, *Cross and Commissar*, 3. Broun also emphasizes the diverse religious situation that existed throughout the Soviet bloc. Broun, *Conscience and Captivity*, xi. Mojzes' study emphasizes both the differences and continuities of religious policy across the So-

result, the officially recognized Catholic Church in Slovakia had a more limited relationship with grassroots activity than the Evangelical Church in the GDR.

Measures of religiosity indicate varying levels between Slovaks and East Germans before the collapse of Communism. Religiosity—or “being religious”—references an individual’s devotion and/or willingness to act or participate in the rituals that reflect the beliefs of a particular religion.<sup>13</sup> It can also be measured—as Paul Froese and Steven Pfaff do in their comparative analysis of the transition period—through indicators such as “church attendance, belief in God, and self identification as ‘religious.’”<sup>14</sup> Despite the subjugation of the church hierarchy in Czechoslovakia, religiosity, particularly in Slovakia, remained stronger there than in the GDR. In a 1988 study published by the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, a senior researcher classified the majority of the districts (58 of 76) in the Czech lands as predominantly non-religious and the majority of the districts (36 of 38) in Slovakia as predominantly religious.<sup>15</sup> This geographic assessment recognizes some of the complexity of measuring religiosity. James Bjork’s research on postwar Poland found that religiosity varied in different regions.<sup>16</sup> Bruce R. Berglund makes a similar assessment of the Czech lands in the post-communist period: “The individualized spirituality observed in Western Europe is evident throughout contemporary Czech society, countering the notion of the Czechs as an atheistic nation.”<sup>17</sup> This suggests the possibility of finding religious-based dissent in countries where measures of religiosity were otherwise low. This was certainly the case in the GDR. Using numbers taken from the *World Values Survey*, Froese and Pfaff found religiosity in the GDR to be amongst the lowest in the Soviet bloc. In 1990 only 15.5% of the East German population stated that religion was “very important” to them and 37.7% of the population considered themselves religious.<sup>18</sup> Though the Evangelical Church had maintained much of its autonomy, the secularization efforts of the party-

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viet bloc. Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*. For other volumes detailing the diverse religious situations in East Europe, see Beeson, *Discretion and Valour*; and Ramet, ed. *Catholicism and Politics*.

<sup>13</sup> See Jonathan Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious,” 281 and Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 47–50.

<sup>14</sup> Froese and Pfaff, “Replete and Desolate Markets,” 483.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Martin, “Church State Relations,” *RFE/RL*, 27 December 1988, 19–24.

<sup>16</sup> Bjork, “Bulwark or Patchwork?”

<sup>17</sup> Berglund, “Drafting a Historical Geography,” 346.

<sup>18</sup> Froese and Pfaff, “Replete and Desolate Markets,” 498.

state in the GDR had been much more successful after 1945. For example, the party-state's introduction of the youth consecration training and ceremony in 1954 (Jugendweihe) offered a strong secular alternative to the Evangelical Church's traditional confirmation classes. The Evangelical Church retained the largest confessional membership in the GDR by 1990, but the trend had been one of decline. Ramet summarizes, "The Evangelical Church, which numbered 14.2 million adherents in 1946, had only 10.1 million in 1964, and as of 1986 it claimed just 6.4 million members."<sup>19</sup> Despite the elements of institutional autonomy that the Evangelical Church had maintained—which allowed it to support grassroots activity—the situation for Lutherans (and Christians in general) was certainly not rosy in the GDR.

Finally, the nature of independent activity in Slovakia and the GDR was quite diverse. Catholics in the secret church struggled to create in the underground what they could not claim, without repercussions, above ground: freedom to practice their faith. When Slovak Catholics began acting publicly in great numbers in the 1980s, their activities centered on the demand for greater religious freedom. In the GDR, the activism of Christians—whose church had maintained an increased degree of institutional autonomy through accommodation with the party-state—addressed specific interests, such as environmental protection and peace. The nature of independent activism in Slovakia was a more defiant religiosity than what was found in the GDR. Participating in secret church activities was more subversive (with greater risks) than participating in the church-sponsored activities that formed the grassroots movement in the GDR. Christians in Slovakia and the GDR pursued distinct projects with different goals at the grassroots level. Slovak Catholics were motivated by religious beliefs to continue their spiritual development; their protests prioritized demands for greater religious freedom. In the GDR, interest groups sponsored by local churches pursued programs and activities framed in theological terms. Rather than pursuing religious freedom or spiritual development, the East German activists promoted theological interpretations of issues ranging from peace and the environment to poverty in the third world that challenged the party-state's understanding of these issues.

State power faced a consistent and expanding challenge from the religious sphere in both Slovakia and East Germany. Slovak and East German activists were in countries with rich religious traditions and with

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<sup>19</sup> Ramet, *Nihil Obstat*, 53.



religious institutions that had strong international ties to other religious institutions: Slovak Catholics to the Vatican and East German Lutherans to the Evangelical Church in West Germany. Striking similarities exist in how Slovaks and East Germans successfully organized activities, published newsletters, and met privately and publicly independent of state control. In both cases, participants included intellectuals and workers, men and women, and sometimes even children.<sup>20</sup> Their activism extended beyond the capital cities of Prague and East Berlin. The secret church functioned as a larger, more unified structure, and therefore my analysis focuses on its activities throughout Slovakia and even in the Czech lands. In the GDR, grassroots activity was more decentralized and largely located at the local level in small groups. My research on peace groups in the GDR focuses on the evolution of a small group of pacifists in Leipzig named *AG Friedensdienst* (Working Group in the Service of Peace); yet, such groups existed in towns and cities throughout the GDR. Regardless of the variables that made life in Czechoslovakia and East Germany distinct, religious beliefs compelled these communities of individuals to act and to practice their beliefs even when it was difficult. In the state socialist period of East Europe, the religious sphere did not always become oppositional or challenge state power. Most notably, the Orthodox Church in southeast Europe played much less of an oppositional role during the communist period.<sup>21</sup>

In Czechoslovakia and the GDR—and throughout the Soviet bloc—the state was subordinate to the Communist Party and implemented the policies established by the Party leadership of each country. Though the Communist Party pursued aggressive policies against religion and religious institutions in Soviet Russia after 1917 and in East Europe after the Second World War, Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin initially had viewed attacks on religion as counter-productive. Trevor Beeson, in the introduction of his often-cited survey of the religious situation in Russia and East Europe under Communism, offers a lucid explanation of the Communist Party's critical view of religion. Marx's famous label of religion as the "opium of the masses" identified religion as a symptom, rather than a cause, of man's economic exploitation. Beeson explains that at the congress of the First International in 1865, Marx argued that the organiza-

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<sup>20</sup> This study's focus on citizens engaged in activism is in contrast to Mary Fulbrook's broader social history of East Germans who had "lived through it all." Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 3–5.

<sup>21</sup> Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*, 31.

tion's efforts should address the cause, rather than this symptom, of economic exploitation. Lenin, in contrast, distinguished between the state and the party. Identifying religion as a private matter, he argued that there should be a separation between church and state and that everyone must have the right to worship or not to worship. However, due to the close relationship between the Tsar and the Russian Orthodox Church, the church represented an obstacle that the Bolshevik party attacked after 1917. Beeson emphasizes that tensions between Communism and religion are not only the product of Lenin and the Bolshevik revolution, but also that they were an inherent aspect of Marxism, which left no room for religious belief.<sup>22</sup>

Though Marxism provides a common ideological foundation for each Communist Party's stance against religion in East Europe, studies of church-state relations emphasize the many differences that characterized these relations in East Europe. In 1987, Ramet wrote: "Communist regimes...viewing all religious organizations as potential political rivals and some religious organizations as also potential policy tools, adopt a policy that strives to control and manipulate existing religious institutions and to erode the bases of their grassroots loyalty."<sup>23</sup> Even policies of compromise or cooperation pursued by the party-state were oriented toward a longer term goal of secularization and building loyalty to the party-state.<sup>24</sup> Ramet further challenges the monolithic conception of church-state relations by arguing that state policy regarding the practice of religion evolves with the political system. In a comparative analysis of the party-states' religious policies in the Soviet Union, China, Yugoslavia, Cuba, and Poland, she demonstrates that religious institutions may be treated differently during the evolution of the political systems.<sup>25</sup> The nature of religious activism also adapts to changes in the political context.

I am particularly interested in the arenas where state power is challenged. In their 1965 study *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski recognize that "islands of separateness"—a space for independent activity—could exist within what they

<sup>22</sup> Beeson, *Discretion and Valour*, 15–20. For a thorough discussion of Marx, Engels, and Lenin's view of religious liberty, see chapters 2 and 3 of Paul Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*.

<sup>23</sup> Ramet, *Cross and Commissar*, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Ramet, *Cross and Commissar*, 3–4. Mojzes' study emphasizes both the differences and continuities of religious policy across the Soviet bloc. Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*.

<sup>25</sup> Ramet, *Nihil Obstat*, chapter 2.

identify as totalitarian systems. Friedrich and Brzezinski argue that no political system can be truly totalitarian and that the church represents one of several such potential islands or arenas.<sup>26</sup> The second arena can be found in the interactions between state and society in each country. Grzegorz Ekiert's comparative analysis of the crises in 1956, 1968, and 1980 examines the interactions between state and society in East Europe at times when the fragility of state power is most evident.<sup>27</sup> This study explores the intersections—such as public gatherings, petitions, letters, meetings between state and church representatives—where state power could be contested or challenged.

Both arenas correspond to the “free spaces” that Froese and Pfaff<sup>28</sup> discuss and, which became well-known through the work of Sara M. Evans and Harry C. Boyte. In their comparative study of social movements in North America, Evans and Boyte describe free spaces as “settings between private lives and large-scale institutions where ordinary citizens can act with dignity, independence, and vision.”<sup>29</sup> The ordinary people who make use of the free spaces become civically engaged and, thus, seeds of democratic movements. Evans and Boyte emphasize the role of community-based organizations, particularly traditional institutions such as churches, in providing such a space. One of their case studies explores the role of the Southern Black church. As an institution outside of the influence and control of the dominant white power, it became a free space for opposition to segregation in the United States. While many studies have used this concept to examine other cases in North America and Western Europe, recent scholarship has applied this concept to non-Western, authoritarian systems, such as Kuwait where mosques became free spaces for the opposition to the Iraqi occupation in 1990.<sup>30</sup> Francesca Polletta's survey of scholarship on “free spaces” raises many questions about the limits and nature of freedom within these spaces. For example, during the Second World War, American conscientious objectors found their free space in internment camps.<sup>31</sup> Charles Tilly's work on the same subject,

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<sup>26</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 239.

<sup>27</sup> Ekiert, *The State Against Society*.

<sup>28</sup> Froese and Pfaff, “Replete and Desolate Markets,” 484–485.

<sup>29</sup> Evans and Boyte, *Free Spaces*, 17.

<sup>30</sup> Charles Tilly examines what he refers to as “safe spaces” in France and England between 1750 and 1900. Tilly, “Spaces of Contention,” 135–159. See also Tétreault, “Civil Society in Kuwait,” 275–291.

<sup>31</sup> Francesca Polletta specifically refers to James Tracy's work on radical pacifism to raise this question. Polletta, “Free Spaces’ in Collective Action,” 6. See Tracy, *Direct Action*.

using the terminology of “safe spaces,” indicates that they can be found in “public occasions on which authorities tolerate or even encourage large, extraordinary assemblies in selected sites, thus providing opportunities for both airing of generally forbidden claims and access to large audiences for those claims.” Tilly explores how such spaces can further facilitate the mobilization of a population, and he writes, “[Safe spaces] increase the ease with which potential dissidents meet, communicate, organize, act, and evade repression.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, free spaces or safe spaces may be found in a variety of settings or locations. Their construction can support the development of civil society and the mobilization of citizens in social movements.

The free spaces constructed in Slovakia and East Germany functioned in diverse ways, which influenced the nature and orientation of the mobilizations. John C. Torpey refers to the Evangelical Church in East Germany specifically as a “free space,” yet argues that the church’s conciliatory relationship with the state created tensions between the activists who used the spaces and wanted to be more oppositional than the church.<sup>33</sup> However, the boundaries of these free spaces are not always so clear and defined. After the Soviet-led invasion in 1968, Paulina Bren argues that the shift to the “quiet life” by Czechs and Slovaks during normalization required some form of collaboration with the party-state. Bren writes, “the lines of difference were blurred, decision making became more complex, and ethical ambiguity proved to be the burden not only of the greengrocer [Václav Havel’s representation of compliance by the ordinary citizen] but also of the antiregime dissident and the party apparatchik.”<sup>34</sup> As Jonathan Bolton thoughtfully explains, the terms “dissent” and “dissident” were actually imposed on East Europe by Western journalists and scholars in the context of the Cold War.<sup>35</sup> Very few of the activists I interviewed for this project actually considered themselves to have been “dissidents;” most lived in a world where their activism intersected with aspects of everyday life.

Rather than examining the mechanics and machinations of state institutions and its tools of power, this study explores the challenges to state power from the perspective of Slovak Catholic and East German Protestant activists themselves. In other words, this is not the story of the party-

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<sup>32</sup> Tilly, “Spaces of Contention,” 144.

<sup>33</sup> Torpey, *Intellectuals, Socialism, and Dissent*, 80, 91.

<sup>34</sup> Bren, *The Greengrocer and his TV*, 7.

<sup>35</sup> Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent*, 3.

state's institutions, though many of the party-state's policies and efforts will be discussed. While the withering of religious institutions and religious belief had been important priorities in both socialist Slovakia and the GDR, neither party-state succeeded in achieving its atheistic goals or preventing the non-conformist actions of its citizens.

The evidence presented in this study of grassroots activism comes from samizdat (self-published)<sup>36</sup> and other publications produced by activists, interviews with former participants, local church records, and materials from private collections of Slovaks and East Germans involved in spheres of non-state activity. Many of those involved in the secret church have published memoirs or accounts of their activities. These participant histories provide an important perspective on the development of the secret church and its diverse activities.<sup>37</sup> The secret church produced an extensive body of religious samizdat literature in the 1980s that provides an internal view of the secret church and its activities.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> In 1986, a reader criticized the journal *Religion in Communist Lands* (published by Keston College) for using samizdat accounts in their analysis of the 1985 pilgrimage to Velehrad. The reader argued that the samizdat reports were biased and gave the event undeserved political significance. Alexander Tomsy, the researcher for Czechoslovakia at Keston, responded by arguing the samizdat accounts faithfully represented the reported event, and that its reliability was further confirmed by half a dozen other accounts of the same event. See *Religion in Communist Lands* 14, no.1 (Spring 1986): 77–80. For recent research on samizdat, see Snajdr, “From Brigades to Blogs,” 493–508.

<sup>37</sup> As an activist in the secret church in the 1980s, Frantisek Mikloško's 1991 book is an important participant history of the secret church. Mikloško interviewed two of the secret church's founding fathers, Silvester Krčméry and Vladimír Jukl, for information on this first stage of the secret church's development. Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť*. In 1995, Krčméry and Jukl published their own account of the secret church's foundation, Krčméry and Jukl, *V šlapajach kolakoviča*. Krčméry has also written an account of his prison experience that has been published in both Slovak and English, see *To nás zachránilo* and *This Saved Us*. For the memoir of Tomislav Kolaković, who coordinated the creation of the secret church, see Father George, *God's Underground*. Ján Korec, a secret bishop, published a two volume memoir in samizdat in the 1970s. It was republished after the collapse of Communism, see Korec, *Od barbárskej noci*; Korec, *Od barbárskej noci na slobode* and the English translation of the first volume Korec, *The Night of the Barbarians*. Ján Šimulčík, who was involved in samizdat publishing in the 1980s, has written about Slovak samizdat and secret ordinations. See *Svetlo z podzemia* and *Zápas o nádej*.

<sup>38</sup> Archives with the most extensive holdings on Slovak religious samizdat include: *Listy z podzemia samizdat* archive at the Christian Democratic Movement headquarters, Bratislava, Slovakia (hereafter CDM); Libri Prohibiti *Samizdat* Archive, Prague, Czech Republic (LP); Czechoslovak Documentation Center, Dobřichovice (Prague), Czech Republic (CSDS). The Keston Archive and Library, formerly in Oxford, England (KI) and

In the GDR, believers involved in *Aktion Sühnezeichen* (Action Signs of Reconciliation) and conscientious objectors serving in the *Nationale Volksarmee* (National People's Army, NVA) as *Bausoldaten* (construction soldiers) organized peace activities independent of state control throughout the 1960s and 1970s. From the beginning of the 1980s to the collapse of Communism, a diverse range of church-based groups continued to advance peace work by organizing activities independent of the state throughout the GDR, including Leipzig. Using evidence from local church records, materials produced by Leipzig's church-based groups, reports from local state and party representatives, and interviews with activists and pastors, this study examines the history, the organization, the networks, and the activities of the Bausoldaten and Leipzig's church-based groups.<sup>39</sup>

This book presents a thematic and chronological analysis of the activism of Slovak Catholics and East German Protestants. The institutions of

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the Research Collection of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in the Open Society Archives, Budapest, Hungary (OSA) contain extensive collections of samizdat, press reports and other documents related to religious liberty in Czechoslovakia. The Institute of Contemporary History in Prague (USD) has politically oriented samizdat and other documents from the late 1980s and the fall of 1989.

<sup>39</sup> A number of archives contain extensive collections of materials relevant to this topic. The *Archiv Bürgerbewegung* (Archive of Civil Movements, ABL) in Leipzig contains materials related to Leipzig's groups, including samizdat, church documents, materials produced by each of the groups, and state and party records. The files of the *Jugendpfarramt* (youth parish office), within the Superintendent-West church archive in Leipzig (SLWA), which sponsored many of that city's groups, also contains copies of materials produced by the groups as well as church documents related to their activities. The archive of the Keston Institute also contains an extensive collection of press reports on church-state relations in the former GDR as well as materials produced by church-based groups from all over the GDR. The *Umweltbibliothek* (Environmental Library, UBL) in Leipzig maintains a collection of East German *samizdat* and materials related to the work of Leipzig's environmental group. The archive at the *Stadtgeschichtliches Museum* (Town Historical Museum, SGML) in Leipzig preserves many of the posters produced by Leipzig's groups in the 1980s as well as a small collection of personal documents donated by one of Leipzig's pastors, Wolfgang Gröger. The Matthias Domaschke Archive (MDA) and the Evangelisches Zentralarchiv in Berlin (EZA) contain particularly extensive collections of materials related to the independent peace movement throughout the GDR. Heinz Bächer, one of the founders of AG Friedensdienst, maintains an extensive personal collection of materials related to the group's work. Although he has provided copies of some of these materials to Leipzig's ABL, he granted me full access to his larger private collection (PA-HB)—including a copy of his personal Stasi file. These materials make an extensive examination of AG Friedensdienst possible.

the Catholic and Evangelical Churches in these two countries had very different positions *vis-à-vis* the Communist regime. I compare the nature of church-state relations in Slovakia and the GDR after 1945 in chapter 1. Pursuing a repressive policy against religion in Czechoslovakia after 1948, the Communist regime not only restricted religious activity, but also infiltrated and controlled the remaining church organizations. In contrast, the Evangelical Church in the GDR maintained a considerable degree of institutional independence.

In chapter 2, I explore how Catholics in Slovakia resisted the state's policies by constructing an underground secret church where Catholics could meet and worship without persecution. The underground nature of the free space constructed in Slovakia contrasts with the situation of Protestants in the GDR. The Evangelical Church gave East German Christians a place to gather, supported their activities dedicated to peace and reconciliation (with Germany's Nazi past), and advocated for conscientious objectors opposed to the GDR's military policies.

Slovaks and East Germans found ways to publish books, periodicals and essays outside the limits of state censorship, which I discuss in chapter 3. In Slovakia, the secret church developed an extensive samizdat network in the 1980s that included over twenty periodicals that targeted the specific interests and needs of its community. As an illegal method of publication, samizdat publishers and readers put themselves at great risk for participating in this non-conformist activity. Some samizdat also developed in East Germany, but the relative autonomy from state control allowed the Evangelical Church to support a form of grassroots publishing that shifted censorship from the state to the church. These church-sponsored publications enjoyed a legal status, though their distribution and content—in principle—had limits.

I examine the transformation of non-conformist activity in the 1980s through the creation of new public spaces in chapter 4. In Slovakia, secret church activists helped rejuvenate the annual pilgrimage tradition. In the resulting public spaces Catholics (both those involved in the secret church and those not involved in the secret church) could express their faith publicly and challenge the state's religious policies. In East Germany, the grassroots activity expanded at the local level as former conscientious objectors and other activists sponsored by the Evangelical Church formed networks and organized activities in towns and cities throughout the country. Whereas grassroots activity before the 1980s had emphasized peace, issues such as environmentalism and poverty in the third world became new areas of interest to activists throughout the decade.

As they became increasingly oppositional in the late 1980s, Slovaks and East Germans faced different obstacles to challenging the state more explicitly. The shift from prayers to protests is examined in chapter 5. For Slovak Catholic activists, the protests benefited from the institutional structure and networks of the secret church and the willingness of Catholics to risk persecution from the state by signing petitions or attending a demonstration. In the GDR, activists interested in protests faced an additional obstacle: the Evangelical Church. While church sponsorship brought resources and protection to the groups it sponsored, it also had a moderating influence. In Leipzig, efforts to directly protest state power often created new tensions between the grassroots groups and their church sponsors. Many groups found that they needed to leave the protection of the church to fully pursue their goals.

Activists in the secret church and church-based groups in Leipzig became increasingly integrated with other interest groups who were also challenging state power. The creation of archipelagos of independent activity, their links with each other, and their influence on the protests is explored in chapter 6. The revolutions in the fall of 1989 caught many Western analysts by surprise. They were the result of many factors, and scholarship in the last two decades has examined everything from Gorbachev's influence to the role of social movements, economic crises, and political stagnation, to explain the collapse of Communism. As in the GDR, the party-state in Czechoslovakia rejected Mikhail Gorbachev's reform policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* and took steps that one political analyst for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty classified as "ideological hardening."<sup>40</sup> The revolutions of 1989, where the mobilization of believers and non-believers converged in the streets of Bratislava and Leipzig to demand political change, are discussed in chapter 7.

The independent activity of George Orwell's Winston Smith remained confined to the portion of his living room that was beyond the viewing area of the telescreen. He never succeeded in finding or constructing a space where he could transform his interests into public action. Though Slovak Catholics and East German Lutherans at first found only small ways to act independent of the state, they gradually extended the scope of their activism into the public sphere to effectively challenge state power.

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<sup>40</sup> Pehe, "Czechoslovakia: An Abrupt Transition," 348.



## CHAPTER 1

# Catholics, Protestants, and the State

Dennison Rusinow's 1983 analysis of church-state relations throughout the region categorizes the various policies and positions the regimes adopted toward religion. Within his typology, which classifies the status of religion into four categories based on the regimes' policies, the Catholic Church in Poland had retained the highest level of institutional autonomy. In the second category, which included Yugoslavia and Hungary, the range of church activities permitted by the party-state had been broadened due to the regime's reexamination of Marxism-Leninism. Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia belong to the next two categories, respectively. While believers in Bulgaria were genuinely tolerated because the party leadership viewed the church as a harmless institution, Czechoslovakia's political leaders viewed the Catholic Church as a threat to party-state power and adopted aggressive policies against an already weakened church.<sup>1</sup> Though the Evangelical Church in the GDR is not identified within this typology, its status would be similar to that of the Catholic Church in Poland as it retained many elements of institutional autonomy and the party-state's willingness to work with this church body.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the Polish Catholic Church, however, the Evangelical Church became increasingly willing to accommodate itself to the party-state, in an effort to define a new relationship between Christians and non-Christians who shared what had become a more permanent political situation. Many scholars, such as Gerhard Besier and Robert F. Goeckel, date the beginning of this policy of accommodation after the construction of the

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<sup>1</sup> Rusinow, "Churches and States in Eastern Europe," 1–3.

<sup>2</sup> Albania is ranked in this article as having one of the most repressive regimes in terms of its restrictive religious policies. Ibid. Rusinow's article summarizes many of the points discussed at an international symposium entitled "Freedom of Religion, Human Rights and Détente in Eastern Europe," that took place in Vienna in May 1983. The papers were published in Lendvai, ed., *Religionsfreiheit und Menschenrechte*.

Berlin Wall in 1961.<sup>3</sup> The Evangelical Church formally pursued a policy of compromise and cooperation with the party-state in the 1970s when it adopted the position a “Church in Socialism” after severing its ties with its West German half.

Slovak Catholics and German Protestants had responded very differently to fascism during the Second World War, which had significant consequences for each church after 1945. Restrictions on the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia preceded the Communist takeover in 1948 by several years, primarily due to the close relationship church and state had shared in the first Slovak Republic under Monsignor Tiso. As the Czech lands became a protectorate of the German Reich in March 1939, a Catholic priest, Jozef Tiso, became the president of an independent Slovakia. However, the level of actual independence is questionable since a 1939 treaty with Germany aligned Slovakia’s foreign and defense policies with Germany’s. Under Tiso, the church extended its influence over public life. Authoritarian rule influenced by a clerical leadership developed, particularly after 1942 when Tiso used a failed coup attempt to consolidate his power and assume the title *Vodca* (leader). Confiscations of Jewish property and deportations of Slovakia’s Jews began in 1942. In 1947 a Czechoslovak court executed Tiso for treason against Czechoslovakia and collaboration with fascism.<sup>4</sup> Ramet argues that as early as 1945, the provisional government in Czechoslovakia began nationalizing the property of the Catholic Church, including its schools and publishing houses.<sup>5</sup> In other words, the wartime association of the Catholic Church with fascism via Tiso yielded restrictions on the church’s presence in Czechoslovakia even before the Communist Party took power in 1948.

In contrast, the Evangelical Church in the GDR enjoyed a reputation in the postwar years of having resisted Nazism. In 1934, the Protestant Swiss theologian Karl Barth, responding to the rise of Adolf Hitler and National Socialism in Germany, called for Christian resistance to any government that acted against the will of God. Barth’s principles inspired the foundation in that same year of the Confessing Church in Germany which resisted the Nazis’ efforts to subjugate the Evangelical Church.<sup>6</sup> Some

<sup>3</sup> Gerhard Besier, “Religion and Politics in Dictatorships and Democracies,” 16. See also Goeckel, *The Lutheran Church*, 62–63.

<sup>4</sup> Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator*. See also Jelinek, *The Parish Republic*, 91–100.

<sup>5</sup> Ramet, *Cross and Commissar*, 76.

<sup>6</sup> Goeckel, *The Lutheran Church*, 18–19. For the Confessing Church’s resistance to Nazism, see Peter Hoffman, *The History of the German Resistance 1933–1945*, 13–14. Barth’s principles were articulated in the Barmen Theological Declaration. See Ahlers,

members, most notably Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, opposed every policy and activity of the Nazis, while other pastors restricted their criticisms to Nazi interference in the church's affairs.<sup>7</sup>

The Confessing Church ceased to exist after the Second World War, but many of its members brought the principles of the movement into the new postwar church and the Evangelical Church benefitted from a reputation of having actively resisted Nazism. From 1945 to the foundation of the GDR on October 7, 1949 the Evangelical Church reestablished many of its traditional institutions and did so maintaining their autonomy from the state. The provisional government in the Soviet zone, led by the Socialist Unity Party (SED),<sup>8</sup> recognized the Confessing Church's opposition to Hitler and the Nazis. Catholic opposition to Nazism, which had been quite extensive, had largely originated in territory that would become West Germany. Though Protestants had been active in the Nazi-sponsored German Christian movement, many of the clergy active in the Confessing Church had served prison sentences with German communists during the war, which facilitated the relatively positive relationship between church and state that developed afterwards.<sup>9</sup> Richard W. Solberg's account of this period explains that this window of cordial relations gave the Lutheran clergy "time [before the struggle between party-state and church began in 1950] to reorganize their church structures, to elect their new synods and to establish ties with their spiritual brethren in West Germany and in the ecumenical world."<sup>10</sup>

By 1949, both churches belonged to Communist states whose governments introduced efforts to place the churches and religious activities

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*The Barmen Theological Declaration of 1934.* For an excellent analysis of the Barmen Declaration and the history of the Confessing Church, see Spotts, *The Churches and Politics in Germany*, 9–12.

<sup>7</sup> See Baranowski, *The Confessing Church*.

<sup>8</sup> The Soviet-directed Communist Party of Germany (KPD) had merged with the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) in the Soviet Zone to form the Socialist Unity Party (SED) in 1946. Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918–2008*, 120.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of Catholic opposition, see Graham, "The 'Right to Kill' in the Third Reich," 56–76. For a review of recent scholarship on the relationship between the churches and Nazi state, see Ruff, "The Nazis' Religionspolitik," 252–267. Spotts, citing figures provided by leading members of the Confessing Church, counted approximately 3,000 pastors arrested under the Third Reich. The Nazis sent at least 125 of these to concentration camps and executed 22. Spotts, *The Churches and Politics in Germany*, 9.

<sup>10</sup> Solberg, *God and Caesar in East Germany*, 29–31. Solberg's evidence indicates that the goal of avoiding political control over the church prompted some clergy in the Confessing Church to quickly reorganize a new church structure immediately after the war. *Ibid.*, 19–20.

under state control. The creation of state offices in each country to regulate the churches was an important part of this process. The Communist leadership in Prague adopted the position of the international Communist movement that the Vatican was an instrument of world imperialism. It therefore sought to sever the Czechoslovak Catholic Church's ties with the Vatican and to place the church under the legal control of the state.<sup>11</sup> The Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia, already weakened from the 1945 restrictions, lost its autonomy to the state and suffered significant losses of personnel through the dissolution of seminaries and monasteries and the arrests of bishops, priests, and laypeople in the early 1950s.

During this same period, the German Protestants rebuilt their organizational structure. In 1948, Protestant leaders founded the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD), a decentralized organization that coordinated the work of the church throughout each of the occupation zones of post-war Germany.<sup>12</sup> The Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, both created in 1949, divided Germans between two political and economic states. However, the EKD remained as a single church institution overseeing the pastoral care of Protestants in the two Germanys. The *Landeskirche* (regional church) had been the basic unit of the Evangelical Church in Germany since the Reformation. Each *Landeskirche* maintained its own organization and elected leadership headed by a bishop. Eight *Landeskirchen* had existed within the Soviet zone, and they belonged to the all-German EKD after 1948. While its believers faced persecution and the church could not stop secularization efforts, such as the introduction of the youth consecration program (*Jugendweihe*) in 1954, the church as an institution did not experience the large scale arrest of its clergy and the closure of seminaries that took place in Czechoslovakia.

### **Czechoslovakia: Repression of the Catholic Church**

The Communist leadership in Czechoslovakia began its persecution of the Catholic Church in 1949. On October 14, the Czechoslovak National Assembly created a State Office for Church Affairs. This office, a part of the Ministry of Culture, required all clergy, including bishops, to take an oath

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<sup>11</sup> Kaplan examines the policies, goals, and results of the Party's efforts against the Catholic Church. Kaplan, "Church and State—Part I," 60–69.

<sup>12</sup> Spotts, *The Churches and Politics in Germany*, 12.

of loyalty to the state.<sup>13</sup> According to the law that created this office, priests and bishops could not serve in a parish or diocese without the approval of the state.<sup>14</sup> Earlier steps had already increased the party-state's administrative control over the church. In June, government decrees permitted state representatives to seize the bishops' offices in each diocese and to censor all church circulars and pastoral letters.<sup>15</sup> The party-state's administrative attack also focused on the church's associations, its schools and its publications. The Catholic Church was required to acquire state permission in order to organize public religious gatherings, such as pilgrimages.<sup>16</sup>

In August 1949, the party-state also turned its efforts against the Greek Catholic Church, found predominantly in eastern Slovakia. The Greek Catholic Church, also known as the Uniate Church, recognized the Pope in Rome but conducted its services in the Eastern rite of the Orthodox Church. The Greek Catholic Church belonged to the Vatican's Congregation for Eastern Churches.<sup>17</sup> The party-state's goal, therefore, was to dissolve the church's structure and sever its believers' ties with the Vatican. The state gradually incorporated the Greek Catholic Church's press, and then its priests and members, into the Orthodox Church with the goals of shifting its orientation from Rome to the East.<sup>18</sup> The state, concerned with its ties to the Vatican, dissolved the Greek Catholic Church in 1950 and arrested its bishop, Pavol Gojdic, and the auxiliary Bishop Vasil Hopko. Hopko was placed in a psychiatric clinic and Gojdic died in prison in 1960.<sup>19</sup>

The party-state next targeted Czechoslovakia's 258 monastic orders and 750 convents. Following a press campaign against the order communities and a show trial of superiors of several orders on March 31, 1950, the dissolution of the orders began after midnight on April 13 in an operation code named "Action K."<sup>20</sup> Ján Korec, then a 26-year-old student studying to

<sup>13</sup> See Korec, *Od barbarskej noci*, 57. Kaplan's numbers indicate that there was little resistance among the clergy to this oath. Of those asked to take the oath in January and February 1950, only 16 of 2,916 clergy in the Czech lands and 16 of 2,112 (all denominations) in Slovakia refused. Kaplan, "Church and State—Part II," 181–182.

<sup>14</sup> Reban, "The Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia," 147.

<sup>15</sup> Korec, *Od barbarskej noci*, 55.

<sup>16</sup> Kaplan, "Church and State—Part I," 69.

<sup>17</sup> "The Ups and Downs of the Greek Catholic Church," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 14 July 1976, 9.

<sup>18</sup> Korec, *Od barbarskej noci*, 56.

<sup>19</sup> "The Ups and Downs of the Greek Catholic Church," 10.

<sup>20</sup> A samizdat article by Dr. Karel [last name illegible] describes the secret police's repression against the Catholic Church between 1948 and 1958, including "Aktion K" in "StB

become a Jesuit priest in Trnava (western Slovakia), describes opening his door after midnight that night to find members of the militia dressed in civilian clothes with automatic rifles in the hall: "I dressed quickly and we were taken to the [area in front of the chapel] where other priests, monks and theology students were already assembled. When everyone was there, the head of the militia operation, dressed in a leather jacket, announced that according to government orders, we were to pack and return to this spot and then a bus would take us away. We only had twenty minutes to pack."<sup>21</sup> Last minute permission from the guards to bring a soccer ball lifted the spirit of everyone as they boarded two waiting buses, which drove through dawn to Eastern Slovakia. Korec recalled seeing people—including women crying—lining the road in the morning, which he saw as an indication that other similar transports had already gone by. In the east they were held at monasteries that had been turned into concentration camps with priests, monks, nuns, and students from orders throughout Slovakia. After being held in three different locations during a five-month period, Korec, fellow student Pavol Hnilica and three other Slovak Jesuits were allowed to return to civilian life in September 1950 for health reasons. The rest, however, were sorted into different groups with some forced into military service and others to construction work on a nearby dam.<sup>22</sup>

When Czechoslovakia was reestablished at the end of the Second World War, nineteen bishops served the thirteen dioceses, 6,000–7,000 priests ministered the 9.5 million Catholics, and over 800 students studied in fifteen seminaries.<sup>23</sup> Following the party-state's repression of the church between 1949 and 1951, 3,000 priests and 8,000 of the 12,500 monks and nuns had been sentenced to prison or labor camps. Only two seminaries remained open and the state held tight control over their curriculum and admissions.<sup>24</sup>

Bishops were not immune from the persecution and the party-state carried out two show trials of bishops, one in the Czech lands (November 27,

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Včera a dnes: procesy s katolíckou Cirkvou," *Výber* 4 (1984): 27–28. See also Kaplan, "Church and State—Part II," 185–187.

<sup>21</sup> Korec describes this experience in the first volume of his memoirs written in 1976. His memoirs only existed in the underground until they were legally published in 1990. Korec, *Od barbarskej noci*, 10.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 13–29.

<sup>23</sup> See Korec, *Od barbarskej noci*, 48 and Tomskey, "Der Katholizismus," 125. Both estimates are quite similar, although Tomskey's fifteen seminaries in 1950 reflect an increase from Korec's thirteen in 1945.

<sup>24</sup> Tomskey, "Der Katholizismus," 125.

1950) and one in Slovakia (January 10, 1951). On March 7, 1951, in another high profile case, Czechoslovakia's Archbishop Jozef Beran began a fourteen-year internment outside of Prague. When the dust settled, thirteen of Czechoslovakia's seventeen bishops were either in prison or under house arrest, two were forbidden to carry out their duties, and one was in forced isolation, leaving only one auxiliary bishop who was still performing episcopal functions.<sup>25</sup> As summarized by one scholar, this represented a severe blow to "...a church that depends upon a priesthood for three of the seven sacraments (confession, the Mass, anointing of the sick) and on bishops for two (ordination of priests, deacons, and bishops, as well as, in normal circumstances, confirmation.)"<sup>26</sup> By the end of 1952, the state's attack on Catholicism in Czechoslovakia had successfully eliminated the autonomy of the church hierarchy and the religious institutions that had sustained it.

In addition to creating the Office for Church affairs, the state also created a new structure for priests in 1951 called the "Peace Movement of the Catholic Clergy." While the Office for Church Affairs regulated activities between church and state, the Peace Movement existed as a separate body within the church structure—with no links to the Vatican—that allowed the state to regulate the church's press, seminaries, and other structures, such as its charitable organizations.<sup>27</sup>

In 1968, after his election to First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Alexander Dubček introduced a liberal period of democratization in society under the slogan "Socialism with a human face." The Catholic Church benefited from the Prague Spring in several respects. Milan J. Reban argues that religious matters were not a high priority of the Prague Spring, but some examples of how the church's situation improved include: the building of new churches, a renewed interest in *Katolícké noviny* (*Catholic News*)—the previously censored official news organ of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia—and the dissolution of the peace movement.<sup>28</sup> One of the lasting achievements of the Prague Spring was the rehabilitation and reconstitution of the Greek Catholic Church. In

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<sup>25</sup> This was a mixed success for the state according to Kaplan. Although the episcopate no longer really existed, the state had failed in its goal to break the bishops' ties—as well as their loyalty—to the Vatican. Kaplan, "Church and State—Part III," 275–279.

<sup>26</sup> Corley, "The Secret Clergy," 172.

<sup>27</sup> Alexander Tomsy, "The 'Peace Priests' and the 'Underground Church' in Czechoslovakia," analysis written for Keston College, March 1982, 1, KI: CZ ROM/8/8 *Pacem in Terris*.

<sup>28</sup> Reban, "The Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia," 150–151.

April 1968, surviving elements of the Greek Catholic hierarchy lobbied for the restoration of the Greek Catholic Church, a demand that the reform government approved in June. The Greek Catholic Church successfully reclaimed over 180 (of about 280) churches from the Orthodox church. After the Soviet-led invasion the following month, Gustáv Husák's government tolerated the Greek Catholic Church and, in contrast to the Roman Catholic Church, it was relatively ignored by official propaganda.<sup>29</sup> Estimates in 1988 placed its membership, still primarily in Eastern Slovakia, at 300,000 people.<sup>30</sup>

The Czechoslovak state did not return to the 1950s-style Stalinist arrests and trials in its efforts to remove reformist elements from public life during normalization after 1968. However, the Office for Church Affairs continued to regulate the Catholic Church's activities. In May 1970, this office established a new organization for priests called *Pacem in Terris* to carry on the work of the dissolved peace movement.<sup>31</sup> Through *Pacem in Terris*, the Office for Church Affairs continued its policy begun in 1949 of pursuing the secularization of Czechoslovak society by subjecting its religious institutions to state control and by allowing the remaining religious hierarchy to die out without being replaced by qualified clergy. While the election of Karol Cardinal Wojtyła to the papacy as John Paul II in 1978 contributed to a religious revival amongst Catholics in Czechoslovakia, the party-state did not alter its relationship with the church as an institution and it repeatedly denied the Pope permission to visit the country throughout the 1980s.

The repressive policies of the party-state after 1948 had successfully placed the leaders and the institutions of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia directly under state control. An official, above ground church continued to exist and function until 1989, but it had little autonomy from state power. The party-state exerted control over the officially recognized clergy by regulating the theological training and licensing of clergy, by determining salaries (using salary as a carrot and stick to control clergy

<sup>29</sup> "The Ups and Downs of the Greek Catholic Church," 10–12. For a 1988 samizdat article on Greek Catholic Church before and after the events of 1968, see "Greckokatolíci Československa a udalosti roku 1968," *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* (1988): 6–11.

<sup>30</sup> "Greek-Catholic Priest Banned After Slovak Pilgrimage," *Keston News Service (KNS)* 311 (20 October 1988): 14.

<sup>31</sup> Alexander Tomsy, "Pacem in Terris," *Religion in Communist Lands* 10 (1982): 277. *Pacem in Terris* was formally founded a year later on August 31, 1971. Pietro Modesto, "Czechoslovakia: The Peace Priests' Movement 'Pacem in Terris,'" *Info*, no.4 (December 1980): 15, KI: CZ/ROM/8/8 *Pacem in Terris*.



behavior), by pressuring official clergy to participate in state controlled clergy associations, and by restricting the foreign travel of priests. Religious services and masses continued to be held throughout the communist period, but the intellectual quality and quantity of the clergy had been severely reduced, as illustrated by Sabrina Ramet's estimate: "whereas Bratislava had 160 Catholic priests for 150,000 inhabitants in 1948, it had only twenty for 400,000 in 1987."<sup>32</sup>

### **German Democratic Republic: Autonomy in the Evangelical Church**

Many of the East German Evangelical Church's privileges came under attack by Walter Ulbricht, the head of the SED, between 1949 and 1953, but the repression was less destructive than what had been experienced in Czechoslovakia.<sup>33</sup> In contrast to the repression of religious institutions elsewhere in the Soviet bloc at this time, relatively few church leaders were arrested in the GDR and churches and seminaries remained open and not under direct state control. Many students even continued their theological training at state universities.<sup>34</sup> The party-state appears primarily concerned with the Evangelical Church's ties with the West and its Christian education programs for East German youth. The dual concerns converged in 1952 when the party-state launched a campaign against the Evangelical Church's youth organizations, particularly the Junge Gemeinde (youth group), as agents of West German and American interests.<sup>35</sup> According to Gary Bruce, the highpoint of the Ministry for State Security's campaign against the church came in 1953 with the arrest of pastors and lay leaders (50) and the expulsion of 300 youth from the Junge Gemeinde.<sup>36</sup>

The relationship of the East German Landeskirche with the West was a primary source of tension. The West German church sent pastors and financial support to congregations in East Germany. In 1958, the EKD signed an agreement with the West German Army that allowed pastors to

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<sup>32</sup> Ramet, *Nihil Obstat*, 124. Membership in *Pacem in Terris* was not obligatory and Ramet estimates that only 5–10 % of priests belonged to it by 1988.

<sup>33</sup> Goeckel, *The Lutheran Church*, 42.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 44–47. Solberg's account of this period indicates that the state arrested and imprisoned over seventy pastors and church workers, some in show trials. Solberg, *God and Caesar*, 144–145.

<sup>35</sup> Besier, *Der SED-Staat und die Kirche*, 116.

<sup>36</sup> Bruce, "The Prelude to Nationwide Surveillance," 23–24.

serve as chaplains in its military units. This agreement only applied to the Landeskirche in West Germany, but the party-state, arguing that this agreement tied the EKD to the West German military and NATO, ceased its recognition of the EKD.<sup>37</sup> The East German Landeskirchen maintained their affiliation with the EKD even after the construction of the wall in 1961. In 1969, the East German Landeskirchen formally severed their ties with the EKD by establishing the Federation of Evangelical Churches in the GDR (*Kirchenbund*).<sup>38</sup> The new church organization had a federal administrative structure that united the East German Landeskirchen under the leadership of a single elected bishop. Each Landeskirche, however, maintained its own autonomy and elected its own bishop within this church federation.<sup>39</sup> At its 1971 synod meeting, Bishop Albrecht Schönherr, the first head of the Kirchenbund and a former member of the Confessing Church, introduced the concept of “the Church within Socialism.” Bishop Schönherr acknowledged that the GDR was a socialist state and that the Evangelical Church had a particular role in the GDR shaped by this “socio-economic system.”<sup>40</sup> Erich Honecker, who had replaced Ulbricht in 1971, officially recognized the Kirchenbund as well as the church’s presence in the GDR, particularly its contribution to the social welfare system. With almost fifty hospitals, as well as numerous orphanages, nursing homes for the elderly and homes for the mentally disabled or physically handicapped, the Evangelical Church often provided more humane treatment and better equipment than the GDR’s own social welfare institutions.<sup>41</sup>

The Kirchenbund adopted a moderate position in its relationship with the party-state in the 1970s, choosing to protect its gains and fight for general principles rather than specific cases of discrimination. In other words, it adopted a moderating role between state and society and avoided making (or supporting) statements that challenged the political system. This new, largely informal relationship between church and state did little, however, to improve the situation of individual Christians in the GDR.

<sup>37</sup> Goeckel, *The Lutheran Church*, 52–53.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 70. In the chapters that follow, I will refer to this institution as the “Evangelical Church.”

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 128–132.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 173–174.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 227–228. Broun’s 1988 description of its involvement in social welfare indicates that the church had: “425 elderly homes, 48 hospitals, 89 homes for the mentally and physically disabled, 419 rural nursing stations, 330 convalescent homes, 326 children’s day care centers, 23 children’s homes and 6 hospices for the dying.” Broun, *Conscience and Captivity*, 112–113.

One issue of particular concern to Christian parents and clergy remained the *Jugendweihe* (youth dedication ceremony) for boys and girls upon completing elementary school. Introduced in 1954, it included a program of after school instruction followed by a public ceremony where graduates pledged their personal commitment to building socialism in the GDR.<sup>42</sup> The *Jugendweihe* had been introduced following the party-state's attack on the Evangelical Church's Junge Gemeinde from 1952–1953. The party-state's concern with the Junge Gemeinde is reflected in a December 1952 report that 50 to 70 percent of all upper-class secondary school students belonged to these church groups for youth. As Gerhard Besier notes, the party-state did not take into consideration that every confirmed member of the Evangelical Church automatically became a member of the Junge Gemeinde.<sup>43</sup> In any case, the persecution of the Junge Gemeinde and the introduction of the *Jugendweihe* were related efforts by the party-state to sever the Evangelical Church's ties with East German youth, a situation which the Evangelical Church was never able to rectify.

While the East German clergy and the church hierarchy did not experience the repression that had taken place in Czechoslovakia, Christian youth and their parents were persecuted if they pursued religious instruction. On August 18, 1976 a Pastor named Oskar Brüsewitz immolated himself in the town square of Zeitz after posting a banner critical of the oppression young people faced. Despite the elements of institutional autonomy the Evangelical Church had preserved through accommodation with the party-state, Pastor Brüsewitz's suicide highlighted the reality that life for Christians in the GDR remained very oppressive and that the Church as an institution had not done enough to improve the situation of Christians. Although both the Kirchenbund and the state initially distanced themselves from this act, the response of East German Christians in support of Pastor Brüsewitz's concerns pushed each to pay greater attention to the situation of individual Christians in the GDR.<sup>44</sup> The state, under domestic and international pressure to improve the situation of Christians in the GDR, agreed to a summit with the church. On March 6, 1978, Erich Honecker met with Bishop Schönherr to formally confirm a new relationship that had been slowly emerging since 1971. Honecker granted the church access to television four times a year, pastoral access

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<sup>42</sup> Solberg, *God and Caesar*, 192–197.

<sup>43</sup> Besier, *Der SED-Staat und die Kirche*, 115.

<sup>44</sup> Janice Sapiets, "Protests Over Pastor's Death in East Germany." *Caris Talk* [wire report], no. 29, 20 September 1976, 1-2, KI: GD/Eva 2.

to prisons, and permission to construct new churches.<sup>45</sup> Sabrina Ramet explains that the party-state made several gains from the concessions to the church, including “a more tranquil” relationship with the church. She speculates that this was in anticipation of the party-state’s introduction of pre-military training in ninth and tenth grades later that year as well as Erich Honecker’s interest in using Martin Luther to link the GDR with a heroic past.<sup>46</sup>

The 1978 Kirchentag (church convention) in Leipzig and the 1983 Luther Year celebration demonstrate how the church as an institution, as well as individual Christians, benefited from the new relationship established at the March 6, 1978 summit. Each Landeskirche traditionally organized annual gatherings of church leaders and laypeople. The Landeskirche of Saxony’s event in Leipzig on May 26–28, 1978 happened to be the first of these gatherings to be held after the March summit. The state’s support of the event helped bring an estimated 50,000 people to the final rally, by all accounts the highest attendance at a religious event in East Germany since 1954. State authorities allowed the Landeskirche to use Leipzig’s fairgrounds and two exhibition halls and also designated special trains to help bring Christians from all over the GDR to Leipzig.<sup>47</sup> Approximately 4,200 clergy and laypeople, many of whom were young people, attended the first two days of the event. They attended workshops and discussion sessions in churches throughout the city.<sup>48</sup> Some participants in these discussions reportedly questioned whether the March 6 summit could be trusted. They also expressed their disapproval of the Jugendweihe and the introduction of pre-military instruction for ninth and tenth grade students in the coming year.<sup>49</sup> At the Kirchentag in Erfurt (Thuringia) the following week, attended by over 20,000 people, the state authorities provided similar logistical support.<sup>50</sup> The state support of these public events and the high attendance of young people indicates that the church had

<sup>45</sup> Goeckel, *The Lutheran Church*, 241–244.

<sup>46</sup> Ramet, *Nihil Obstat*, 73.

<sup>47</sup> Eduard Lohse, “‘Kirchentag’ in Leipzig (GDR) Attracts Thousands of Visitors,” *Information Service of the Evangelical Alliance (IDEA)*, no. 21–23, 5 June 1978, 1–2; “50,000 Gather at East German Church Festival,” *The Times* [London], 29 May 1978, 5.

<sup>48</sup> “Great Success for ‘Kirchentag’ in the GDR,” *Ecumenical Press Service*, no. 16 (8 June 1978): 7.

<sup>49</sup> Elizabeth Pond, “E. Germany: Those With Bibles Welcome; Those With Typewriters—Stay Home,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 12 June 1978, 2.

<sup>50</sup> “More Than 20,000 Participate in ‘Kirchentag’ in Erfurt,” *IDEA*, no. 21–23 (5 June 1978): 2; “East German Festivals,” *Christian World* (22 June 1978): 9.

achieved some real gains (an accepted public presence) at the March summit.

The state's involvement in the commemoration of the five-hundredth anniversary of Martin Luther's birthday in 1983 also strengthened the presence of the Evangelical Church. An official Martin Luther Committee of the GDR, founded in 1980 and headed by Erich Honecker, coordinated the state's involvement in the Luther Year preparations. This committee used Luther's accomplishments, which occurred primarily in territory of the GDR, to promote the perception of a distinct East German identity. Honecker argued that Luther's ninety-five theses had unleashed forces for social change. He emphasized the importance of Luther as a revolutionary through his cultural and social achievements and presented the GDR as the heir to this historical tradition.<sup>51</sup> The state promoted this reinterpretation and helped commemorate the anniversary through the publication of over 100 books about Luther,<sup>52</sup> the release of a new postage stamp in his honor,<sup>53</sup> and the production of a television mini-series about his life.<sup>54</sup>

The Evangelical Church certainly benefited from the state's newfound interest in Luther, though its own committee focused on Martin Luther's contributions to theological doctrine (particularly his emphasis on putting God "above all") in its preparations for the anniversary.<sup>55</sup> The Luther Year celebrations offered participants the opportunity to speak publicly about social issues. Over 100,000 people attended the July 10, 1983 Kirchentag in Dresden, the highest attendance at any of seven Kirchentag that the Evangelical Church held during the Luther Year. At this event, church leaders declared the church's support for conscientious objectors, and

<sup>51</sup> Elizabeth Pond, "E. Germany: Luther Moves From 'Lackey' to 'Great Son'" *Christian Science Monitor* (23 June 1980): 3. See also "Rehabilitating Luther," *The Economist*, 12 November 1983, and Ronald D. Asmus, "Honecker on Luther Year Celebrations," *RFE/RL* (21 October 1983): 1-4.

<sup>52</sup> *Martin Luther: Werk und Persönlichkeit* (Leipzig: Buchexport, 1982), KI: GD/Eva 7/1.3. Luther. *Neues Deutschland* also helped publicize the new books. "170 neue Luther-druckenachgewiesen," *Neues Deutschland*, 2-3 April 1983.

<sup>53</sup> "Briefmarkenblock zur Luther-Ehrung," *Neues Deutschland* (23 September 1983): 2.

<sup>54</sup> DEFA, the East German film company, produced the five-part series. "Poetische Formen finden, die den heutigen Zuschauer erreichen," *Neues Deutschland* (1-2 October 1983): 4; "Characterbild einer bedeutenden Persönlichkeit der Geschichte," *Neues Deutschland* (25 October 1983): 4.

<sup>55</sup> Endel Kallas, "What does this Mean? Luther Reassessed in GDR," *Lutheran World Information (LWI)*, no. 30 (1983): 14-17. See also Bishop Albrecht Schönherr's description of the differences between the two committees. "Wir müssen und wollen Flagge zeigen," *Evangelischer Pressedienst (EPD)*, no. 212 (3 November 1980): 6.

discussion sessions addressed topics related to peace and environmental protection.<sup>56</sup> On Luther's birthday, November 10, clergy spoke out in support of conscientious objectors at an ecumenical service in Eisleben where Luther had been born. During the service, Bishop Werner Leich, head of the Kirchenbund and chair of the church's Luther committee, declared: "How can the maintenance of peace be promoted if not by clinging to hope, strengthening the freedom to hold one's own views, not condemning those who think differently, and maintaining dialogue with the aim of reconciliation?"<sup>57</sup> The church rallies and services held throughout East Germany to celebrate the work of Martin Luther became forums where issues such as peace, military service and state repression of the Christians in the GDR could be discussed publicly.

## Summary

The Czechoslovak and East German cases illustrate two ways in which Soviet bloc governments expanded their scope of power after 1948. The religious sphere was just one of many arenas of society over which the party-state extended its control. The international ties of each church were a source of tension with each state. The repression of the Catholic Church by the Communist state after 1949 focused on severing the Catholic Church's ties with the Vatican. The state pursued this institutionally through the creation of the State Office for Church Affairs and the Peace Movement of the Catholic Clergy, reconstituted in 1970 as *Pacem in Terris*. In the GDR, the eight Landeskirchen were institutionally linked with the Landeskirchen in West Germany as members of the German-wide EKD. Because of these ties, the state refused to recognize the EKD after 1958. When the new East German Kirchenbund, created in 1969, introduced the slogan "A Church within Socialism" in 1971, it began a relationship of give-and-take which the state never had with the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia. Though controversial and often criticized as collaborating with the East German state, the Kirchenbund maintained much of its autonomy and used its influence, as evidenced by the 1978

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<sup>56</sup> "Peace Rally in East Germany Draws 100,000," *The Times* [London] (11 July 1983): 4; "Dresden: 100,000 Menschen bei evangelischen Kirchentag," *Kathpress News Agency*, no. 131 (11 July 1983): 3.

<sup>57</sup> "GDR Luther Celebrations Become Political Forum," *LWI*, no. 45 (17 November 1983): 3.

summit with the state, to win concrete concessions for the church and believers in the GDR. The Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia, whose official hierarchy was under tighter state control, had no such independence or bargaining power. Though Czechoslovak Catholics briefly gained some concessions in the context of the Prague Spring, the state continued policies that strove to suppress religious belief during the period of normalization that followed.

State religious policies were more oppressive in Czechoslovakia than in the GDR, yet in terms of secularization, measures of religiosity indicate that state's policies were more successful in the GDR than in Slovakia. In other words, while the Evangelical Church had more institutional power than the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia, the religiosity of Catholics, particularly in Slovakia, remained higher than that of Protestants in the GDR. This difference is most notable in the 1980s when a religious revival following the election of Pope John Paul II mobilized many Slovak Catholics. East German Christians, even while receiving concessions from the party-state in the same year as John Paul II's election and celebrating the Luther Year in 1983, did not experience such a religious revival. Rather than encouraging a religious revival, the party-state's increased militarization in the late 1970s inspired many East German citizens to engage in grassroots activity.

Religious institutions are distinct from religious belief; therefore, state power over the religious sphere was limited in both countries, though in very different arenas. While state power in Czechoslovakia extended over the religious institutions, it had less impact on religious belief. In contrast, the party-state's power *vis-à-vis* the Evangelical Church was located at the institutional boundaries of this church. As an institution, this church had power separate from the state. However, individual Christians did not enjoy this power or independence from state control in their daily lives, as Pastor Brüsewitz tragically recognized. But, as an institution, the church could negotiate with the party-state to extend its presence into new arenas, which Bishop Schönherr did on behalf of the Kirchenbund during the March 1978 summit.

As these two cases indicate, names such as "Evangelical Church" and "Catholic Church" can be misleading as they suggest monolithic institutions pursuing singular goals and policies. The Roman Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia and the Evangelical Church in the GDR were the largest religious institutions in their respective states, but the picture of these institutions is subject to both local concerns and internal divisions. Czech Catholics, Slovak Catholics and Greek Catholics (in eastern Slovakia)

belonged to very different cultural contexts and had varied experiences after 1949. Even within Slovakia, some clergy received lengthy prison sentences or lost their right to perform their pastoral duties legally while others chose to serve as peace priests and work under the Office for Church Affairs. As will be seen in later chapters, even peace priests were sometimes active in underground religious activity. In East Germany, even within the Landeskirchen, local clergy pursued relationships with state officials, as well as the bishops, that ranged from collaboration to confrontation.

How did the different church-state relations affect the worship experiences of believers in Czechoslovakia and the GDR? In both countries, official churches remained open and the sacraments were available to believers of both confessions (though in 1976, a Czechoslovak ordinance prevented the sacraments from being given in hospitals and nursing homes<sup>58</sup>). Given the extensive repression and takeover of the church hierarchy (particularly the seminaries) in Czechoslovakia, the number and quality of priests declined and the spiritual content of services was regulated by the state. A Slovak Catholic visiting the GDR in the 1970s and attending a Protestant service might find the same ratio of pews occupied/unoccupied as in his local church back in Slovakia. Yet, the spiritual content of the services would be very different and the visitor would most likely hear a sermon from an East German pastor who had received a better quality of theological training than his priest back home. If politics or the political system were mentioned in the East German pastor's sermon, the Slovak visitor might be surprised by the neutral treatment of it (not oppositional, rather accepting of the status quo). The contrast would be more so if the visitor's priest back in Slovakia were a member of *Pacem in Terris* who used sermons to promote the party-state's agenda. Certainly the picture of the church and what was experienced or possible at the local level in churches is very complex and varied among parishes throughout Czechoslovakia and East Germany. This illustration, however, points to the consequences of larger policy goals in each country. Both the Czechoslovak and East German party-states prioritized secularization after 1948. Slovak Catholics—who retained their religiosity to a greater degree than East German Protestants (or even Czech Protestants and Catholics)—had a declining number of priests whose training was more heavily regulated by the party-state directing the services. The more secularized East Germans—resulting in fewer church goers—had more churches served by

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<sup>58</sup> Ramet, *Nihil Obstat*, 134.



pastors with better theological training that had not been regulated by the party-state.

Controlling the religious sphere was a high priority of the party-states in Czechoslovakia and the GDR. Each created bureaucratic structures to control and to co-opt religious belief and the institutions whose mission it was to sustain it. While the Evangelical Church in East Germany was more successful in retaining autonomy and using accommodation with the party-state to create opportunities for Protestants, religious freedom did not exist in either East Germany or Czechoslovakia (or in any other Soviet bloc state). As Besier writes, "Religious freedom is one of the great liberties of the free peoples in this world. Without religious freedom other liberties are also at risk. Those who do not enjoy the freedom to believe what they want without danger and to live according to their belief, are not really free."<sup>59</sup> Many of the party-state's policies succeeded in reducing the influence of the Catholic Church in Slovakia and the Evangelical Church in the GDR, but neither succeeded in completely eliminating religious belief and its influence in society.

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<sup>59</sup> Besier, "Religion and Politics in Dictatorships," 17–18.



## CHAPTER 2

# Finding a Space to Think and Act Freely

In Czechoslovakia, where the party-state appeared to have a firm grip on religious institutions, Catholic activists faced the challenge of first building a structure independent of state control and second, using that structure to promote the spiritual development of Catholics. Protestant activists in the GDR did not face such a double burden. With the autonomy of the Evangelical Church already intact, they began using its support to promote a number of special interests, such as peace. Several streams of an independent peace movement in the GDR developed with the support of the Evangelical Church and each opposed the state's military policies. This chapter examines the process of constructing free spaces for independent activity. It compares the goals of East Germans and Slovaks who were engaged within the free spaces prior to the 1980s and connects the nature of those activities to the extent and limits of the free spaces in each country.

### The Slovak Secret Church

The threads that formed the tapestry of the Slovak secret church were woven and rewoven in four distinct phases between 1943 and the 1980s. During the first phase (1943–1948), several dedicated Catholics founded underground lay communities, first in Slovakia and later in the Czech lands. Although the Communist authorities imprisoned many members and leaders of these communities during its repression of the Catholic Church, the secret ordination of priests and bishops during the second phase (1948–1960) preserved a small strand of the Slovak Catholic Church's hierarchy and its connection to the Vatican. With the release in the 1960s of many of those arrested in the previous decade, the under-

ground communities began reestablishing themselves between 1960 and 1968 and building new networks with the secret priests and bishops as they were returned to freedom. Following the Soviet-led invasion in 1968, the basic structure of the secret church took shape and its leaders quietly built networks to link the different strands of its structure.

The strategic and organizational origins of the secret church in Slovakia began in the height of the Second World War with the arrival in Bratislava of a Croatian priest named Tomislav Kolaković-Poglajen during the summer of 1943.<sup>1</sup> Kolaković brought experience in underground religious activity and an emphasis on the importance of lay people. With these qualities, Kolaković established the first seeds of a secret church in Nazi-friendly Slovakia and prepared it for survival and growth during the Communist period. Kolaković was an anti-fascist who organized Christians in the underground in Croatia before coming to Slovakia. In 1944, he joined Slovak resistance fighters in the unsuccessful Slovak National Uprising against fascist troops.<sup>2</sup>

By his own account, Kolaković gained his initial experience in clandestine religious activity in the Christian underground in occupied Croatia. Kolaković, at the urging of some Catholic youth, organized an underground Catholic university in Split in 1941. Kolaković reports that for several months about fifty young men and women met secretly every day in the refectory of a monastery to hear his lectures on economics, sociology, and Christianity. Kolaković's underground university successfully evaded detection by the Italian authorities.<sup>3</sup>

Kolaković's arrival in Slovakia appears motivated by his goal to help re-Christianize Russia. In 1929, Pope Pius XI had initiated a new religious effort in Soviet Russia by creating the "Pontifical Russian College" at the Vatican, also known as the Russicum. Kolaković was one of many priests and students intent on following its mission. The Russicum functioned as an immersion program for a ministry in Russia. Students at the Russicum attended a Mass every morning in the Eastern Rite, and in addition to

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<sup>1</sup> Kolaković traveled to the West after the war and told his story to an American, Greta Palmer. These memoirs of his experiences in Croatia, Slovakia, and Soviet Russia during and after the Second World War were first published in English in 1949 under the pseudonym "Father George." See Father George, *God's Underground*. In 1994, Kolaković's account was published in Slovak and under his own name. Kolaković, *Bozie podzemie*. James Felak notes that his memoirs are unreliable and "should be taken with a grain of salt." Felak, *After Hitler, Before Stalin*, 215n149.

<sup>2</sup> Felak, *After Hitler, Before Stalin*, 35.

<sup>3</sup> Father George, *God's Underground*, 10–19.

learning the Eastern liturgy, they also studied the Russian language. One former student of the Russicum in the late 1930s wrote that he and his fellow students used their free time to learn as much as they could about Russian history and culture.<sup>4</sup> The Vatican's goal was to train priests to serve the spiritual needs of Christians of the Eastern rite in Soviet Russia. Once trained, the followers of Russicum sought clandestine entry into Soviet Russia.

There is little record of the experiences of those who did make it into Soviet Russia as many were arrested or simply disappeared. A few letters to the Russicum and colleagues that did reach the West exist and have been summarized by Robert A. Graham. Their reports suggested a fertile ground for mission work in Russia.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps word of these positive reports reached Kolaković and inspired him and others to pursue this difficult and dangerous mission. In any case, Kolaković became a follower of the Russicum and believed that Christianity had only been institutionally suppressed in Russia.<sup>6</sup>

Although Kolaković's dream of reviving Christianity in Soviet Russia was unrealistic, it is significant for this study in several respects. First, it is one of many motivating factors in his decision to come to Slovakia. He appears to have hoped that when the Russian front eventually advanced into Slovakia, he might be able to find an opportunity to travel into Soviet Russia to pursue his mission.<sup>7</sup> Second, the bond created by graduates of the Russicum and the students who considered themselves followers of Russicum ideals brought the future founders of the secret church together under the leadership of Kolaković. While in Bratislava, Kolaković met two Catholic students—Vladimír Jukl and Silvester Krčméry—interested in the Russicum's mission.<sup>8</sup> Because of their common calling, Jukl and Krčméry established a particularly close relationship with Kolaković. Finally, and most importantly, Kolaković's belief in the possibility of re-

<sup>4</sup> Ciszek, *With God in Russia*, 9–10. See also Stehle, *Eastern Politics*, 129–130.

<sup>5</sup> In 1929, Pope Pius XI also created a "Pontifical Ruthenian College" for work among Ukrainians. Graham, *The Vatican and Communism*, 131–139.

<sup>6</sup> Mikloško writes that Kolaković traveled to Rome and met with Pope Pius XII who granted him permission to pursue a mission to Russia, but not as an official representative of the Vatican. This information, however, is not confirmed in any other accounts. Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť*, 21. There is no indication that Kolaković studied at the Russicum in Rome.

<sup>7</sup> Many followers of Russicum came to Slovakia due to the easier access it provided into Soviet Russia. Graham, *The Vatican and Communism*, 137.

<sup>8</sup> "Dr. Silvester Krčméry 60-ročný," *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 4 (1984): 19.

Christianizing Russia points to an underlying view that religious belief can exist and function without a church hierarchy to sustain it. Kolaković held such great faith in the possibility of restoring Christianity to Russia because he had much, albeit anecdotal, evidence that religious belief had remained an important part of people's lives in Soviet Russia at the private, informal level. Kolaković's underground university in occupied Croatia had demonstrated that Christian worship and ministry could flourish despite the decapitation of the church hierarchy by the German and Italian authorities. Perhaps this success in Croatia accounts for Kolaković's emphasis on the role of laypeople in the furthering of the church's apostolic mission. Krčméry writes, "[Kolaković's] dream was to form a group of people who would be willing, like Christ, to sacrifice everything. It would not be based on traditional structures, such as the clergy or the monastic communities, but rather it would be representative of every social group: youth, adults, laypeople, priests, monks and nuns, and single and married people."<sup>9</sup> In 1943, Kolaković—with the help of Jukl and Krčméry—founded a community of believers in Slovakia and named it the *Rodina* (Family).

As in Croatia, Kolaković spent considerable time with Slovak students and sought to expand his underground with their help. Kolaković gave lectures on sociology, theology, and philosophy. At first, the *Rodina* consisted primarily of students in Bratislava who met privately for bible study and prayer every Sunday in an apartment or home. Within a year, the *Rodina* began to expand throughout Slovakia as these students in Bratislava returned to their hometowns and established new communities of the *Rodina*.

One of Kolaković's primary objectives was to try to prepare the members of the *Rodina* for a period of future persecution and interrogation. Kolaković warned the *Rodina* of the possibility of surveillance by the Gestapo or Slovak State Security, which was already beginning to take notice of his activities. He staged a mock interrogation to prepare the members of the *Rodina* for such an eventuality because he felt persecution would also come after a victory of the Red Army.<sup>10</sup> Although Kolaković's memoirs indicate an expectation that Slovakia would fall under the Soviet Red Army after the war and that he was preparing Slovakia to be part of a communist state, recent scholarship indicates that he was also concerned about the negative impact that American and western capitalism might

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<sup>9</sup> Krčméry and Jukl, *V šľapajach Kolakoviča*, 12.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

have.<sup>11</sup> Until his emigration in 1946, Kolaković had been the leader of the Rodina. Krčméry and Jukl remained in Slovakia to continue the spiritual development of the Rodina's members and to found new communities in Slovakia, as well as in the Czech lands. Krčméry reported that even though he tried to build up the Rodina in Bohemia after the war, it was much smaller there than in Slovakia.<sup>12</sup>

By the time the Communist Party assumed the political leadership of Czechoslovakia in February 1948, Kolaković's Rodina had already been functioning for almost five years. It is difficult to ascertain the exact size and extent of the Rodina in 1948. One estimate by a former member of the secret church puts 500 people in the Rodina by 1945.<sup>13</sup> František Mikloško's history of the secret church contains a list of ninety-six of its early members in Slovakia with information about their occupation, place of residence, and for many, their code name in the underground.<sup>14</sup> Clergy did belong to the Rodina (over 41 priests and monks according to this list), but the twenty-five laypeople and thirty students that belonged to the Rodina reflect Kolaković's stress on the importance of laypeople as apostles. Many of the priests and laypeople were professors, reflecting the fact that Kolaković used students and the university setting to build the foundation of the Rodina. Most of the listed members lived outside of Bratislava in at least seventeen different towns and villages throughout Slovakia. Four of the laypeople and nine of the students from this small sample were women. By 1948, a dedicated network of Christian communities existed throughout Slovakia. Krčméry, describing the importance of the Rodina, explained, "It was the main group, one can say, who was very good [sic] prepared...[to survive a period of] persecution" in the anticipated communist state.<sup>15</sup>

The repression of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia after 1949 hurt the Rodina too. At least thirty-five of the ninety-six Slovak members of the Rodina were sentenced from one to twenty-five years in prison.<sup>16</sup> Among those arrested in 1951 were Silvester Krčméry, sentenced after a

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<sup>11</sup> Felak, *After Hitler, Before Stalin*, 35–36.

<sup>12</sup> Silvester Krčméry, interview by author, Bratislava, Slovakia, 3 July 1996.

<sup>13</sup> Ján Šimulčík, "God's Underground: Catholic Church in Slovakia, 1943–1989," pamphlet, KI: file SL/ROM.

<sup>14</sup> A footnote indicates that this appendix is not a complete list of members. Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť*, 159–161.

<sup>15</sup> Krčméry, interview.

<sup>16</sup> Determined from a comparison of lists of Rodina membership and arrested Catholics in Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť*, 161–178.

three-year investigation to twelve years, and Vladimír Jukl, sentenced to twenty-five years.<sup>17</sup> Neither Krčmery nor Jukl would serve their full sentences.

Faced with the elimination of bishops in Soviet Russia a quarter of a century earlier, the Vatican had sent a priest into Russia to secretly ordain six priests as bishops. The Papal Nuncio of Berlin, Eugenio Pacelli, secretly ordained the priest, a French Jesuit named Michel d'Herbigny when the priest visited en route to Moscow in 1925. D'Herbigny's mission was a mixed success: he ordained the six bishops and safely returned to the West, but the secret bishops were all exposed and eliminated fairly quickly.<sup>18</sup> Pacelli, however, responded to the Communist persecution of the church in Czechoslovakia in 1949 by returning to this strategy of secret consecrations and ordinations during his tenure as Pope Pius XII (1939 to 1958).<sup>19</sup>

Little documentation on these secret ordinations in Czechoslovakia exists, but several scholars have used information from personal interviews of secret clergy to explore the method and success of this strategy. Hansjakob Stehle writes that prior to the expulsion of Monsignor Gennaro Verolino (Vatican's chargé d'affaires in Prague) in July 1949, he traveled the country and vested certain bishops with the "powers to establish a substitute and underground hierarchy."<sup>20</sup> Felix Corley, from an interview with secret clergy, summarized their powers as such: "It seems that with their consecration the new secret bishops received personal episcopal status, which would become effective for diocesan functions only on the arrest of the incumbent bishop. Although documentation on this permission is not available, it seems that each [secret] bishop could consecrate one secret bishop, and these bishops in turn could ordain priests without notifying the state [as required after 1949] or the Vatican, although this second generation of bishops was not empowered to consecrate further bishops."<sup>21</sup> Of the bishops secretly consecrated without state approval in the following year, the majority either fled the country or were discovered by the secret police, a hard fact that reflects the difficulty of keeping such a public position secret. The Vatican abandoned its official approval of

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<sup>17</sup> Krčmery and Jukl, *V šl'apajach Kolakoviča*, 81–93.

<sup>18</sup> Graham, *Vatican and Communism*, 131. D'Herbigny later played an important role in establishing the Russicum in Rome. See Stehle, *Eastern Politics*, 129–130.

<sup>19</sup> Secret ordinations were most common in Czechoslovakia, but the Vatican also permitted them in Romania. Corley, "The Secret Clergy," 173.

<sup>20</sup> Stehle, *Eastern Politics*, 273.

<sup>21</sup> Corley, "The Secret Clergy," 174.



bishops secretly consecrating bishops in the mid-1950s, but some secret bishops did continue to exercise their power of consecration throughout the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>22</sup> Secret ordinations of priests continued until 1989, and were often performed by Czechoslovakia's secret bishops.<sup>23</sup> A number of students traveled outside of Czechoslovakia to either Poland or East Germany for their ordinations. Tomáš Halík, a priest who was secretly ordained in 1978, explained that he studied to be a Priest under Father Zvěřina in the Czech lands, but was actually ordained during a visit to Erfurt, GDR. He indicated that in addition to Erfurt, many students who had secretly completed their theological studies went to Kraków where Karol Cardinal Wojtyła secretly ordained them until his election to the papacy in 1978.<sup>24</sup>

The secret consecration of František Tomášek and Ján Korec as bishops represents two different ways in which the Vatican's strategy succeeded. Of all the bishops secretly ordained in Czechoslovakia, only František Tomášek would hold the position of bishop with the approval of the party-state. Following his secret consecration in Olomouc in October 1949, Tomášek spent three years in forced labor and upon his release could only continue his ministry as a parish priest in a village.<sup>25</sup> His status changed, however, when Archbishop Beran of Prague, at the urging of the Vatican, agreed to leave Czechoslovakia in 1965. For fourteen years, Beran had been interned outside of Prague, and his office had been administered by a vicar capitular loyal to the state. The negotiations that facilitated Beran's departure permitted Tomášek to be officially recognized as

<sup>22</sup> Many of these later consecrations extended far beyond the scope of what the Vatican had originally envisioned. Corley examines the controversy revealed after the Velvet Revolution when many married secret bishops (at least eight) and even women secretly ordained as bishops, came forward seeking official recognition from the Vatican. Several of these consecrations were the work of secret Bishop Felix Davidek, who also secretly ordained hundreds of priests before his death in 1988, many of whom had little or no theological training. Ibid., 181–184.

<sup>23</sup> Korec wrote in the preface of Šimulčík's book that he secretly ordained about 120 priests until 1989. Šimulčík, *Zápas o nádej*, 9.

<sup>24</sup> Tomáš Halík, interview by author, Pittsburgh, PA, 14 September 1999. In a published account of his life and ministry, Halík explains that part of his preparation for the priesthood included participating in spiritual exercises in Slovakia. Jandourek, *Tomáš Halík*, 96–98.

<sup>25</sup> Tomášek recounted his "private...without the permission of the state" ordination as bishop in a 1989 interview. See interview with Cardinal Tomášek, *Roll 49 Panorama Prague*, spring 1989, 3, KI: CZ ROM 8/2 Tomášek, František. See also Stehle, *Eastern Politics*, 274.

the Bishop of Prague by both the Vatican and the Czechoslovak state. As part of the agreement, Tomášek took an oath of loyalty to the state. He became a Cardinal in 1977.<sup>26</sup>

Although Ján Korec shared the fate of many other secret bishops (arrest, imprisonment, and the state's refusal to permit him to perform bishop's duties at the official level), his consecration and intent to perform his duties made him a powerful spiritual, and later political, figure in the emerging secret church in Slovakia. Korec was among the few Jesuit students released from military service and hard labor for health reasons following the dissolution of the order communities in 1950. During Korec's internment in a concentration camp, some students secretly continued their theological studies. One of these students, named Pavol Hnilica, received an early release with Korec for health reasons and helped arrange for Korec to be secretly ordained as a priest by a Slovak bishop who had not yet been arrested.<sup>27</sup> Hnilica had already been secretly ordained as a priest, and in the spring of 1951 he was secretly consecrated as a bishop. For the next several months, Hnilica traveled throughout Slovakia secretly ordaining seminary students.<sup>28</sup> By June 1951, a warrant had been issued for Hnilica's arrest and Hnilica began making plans to leave for the West. A Jesuit priest, who had been authorized by the Vatican, secretly consecrated Korec as a bishop to replace Hnilica in August 1951.<sup>29</sup> The police arrested the Jesuit priest who performed this consecration in 1955, and during his interrogation he admitted to Korec's secret consecration as bishop. Korec, however, was not arrested until March 1960 when he was charged with treason and a court sentenced him to twelve years in prison.<sup>30</sup> In 1968 Bishop Korec, one of the few secretly ordained bishops in Slovakia who had refused to emigrate or collaborate with the regime,

<sup>26</sup> Stehle, *Eastern Politics*, 332–333.

<sup>27</sup> Korec, *Od barbarskej noci*, 31.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 86. Mikloško explains that a Jesuit priest in Bratislava, Matej Marko, coordinated the secret ordinations from his hospital room in Bratislava. He had avoided arrest with the other Jesuits in 1950 due to his hospitalization. Marko had been given special power to conduct secret ordinations and consecrations sometime after February 1948. Marko had been the one to select Hnilica for secret consecration as bishop. Hnilica only agreed to be consecrated as a bishop after he was sure that it had the Vatican's approval. Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť*, 63.

<sup>29</sup> Korec, *Od barbarskej noci*, 87–89. Korec, in a five page letter to the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly, recounts his secret ordination and consecration and persecution by the authorities. Korec letter, 27 April 1980, KI: CZ ROM 8/2 Korec, Jan.

<sup>30</sup> Korec, *Od barbarskej noci*, 153–163, 216. See also “Jubileum biskupa o Jana Chryzostoma Korca,” *Informace o cirkvi* 2 (1984): 9.

received early release from prison. He soon established contact with Krčméry and Jukl, who had also been released early and had already begun rebuilding the Rodina among the students in Bratislava, as Kolakavič had during the war.<sup>31</sup> Korec traveled to Rome in July 1969, and during his ten-day visit, received a private audience with Pope Paul VI, who hugged Korec and presented him with a gold bishop's ring.<sup>32</sup> This private audience and the Pope's gift solidified the legitimacy of Korec's secret consecration two decades earlier and gave the new communities of the Rodina a spiritual leader whose authority did not depend on the state.<sup>33</sup>

In the two decades after 1968, Korec, Krčméry and Jukl slowly organized a religious community that provided many of the activities of church life that could not be pursued in the official sphere. Korec continued to secretly train and ordain men for the priesthood who could not study at the theological seminary. One of these was Jukl, and Bishop Korec ordained him in a twenty-minute ceremony in his home in the Petržalka suburb of Bratislava on January 6, 1971.<sup>34</sup> The secret church created in the 1970s and 1980s was an evolution of the Rodina.<sup>35</sup> Continuing the strategy of forging personal relationships with students studying in Bratislava, Krčméry and Jukl established small communities that usually consisted of ten to fifteen people. They met for prayer and discussion in private homes, and Jukl and Krčméry also arranged hiking trips for these students that included spiritual programs. Prior to their graduation, Korec would hold a special mass for them in which he would discuss the importance of carrying on their ministry by establishing new communities in their hometowns.

The secret church became more organized and capable of fulfilling the spiritual needs of Slovakia's Catholics. A younger generation of Catholics had begun helping Krčméry and Jukl coordinate the activities of an increas-

<sup>31</sup> Krčméry and Jukl, *V šľapajach Kolakoviča*, 93–94. Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť*, 110–111.

<sup>32</sup> Korec, *Od barbarskej noci na slobode*, 37–41.

<sup>33</sup> References to his Papal meeting, as well as his secret ordination, consecration and eight years of imprisonment would precede many of Korec's essays, letters, and interviews in religious samizdat in the 1980s. For example, see "Z exkluzívneho interview," *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 3 (1989): 3.

<sup>34</sup> Jukl and other priests ordained secretly between 1969 and 1989 describe their secret ordinations in this collection of participant accounts. Jukl received a degree in mathematics in 1969. The Roman Catholic Cyril-Methodius Theological Faculty in Bratislava denied Jukl's application for admittance in 1967, citing his "old age and insufficient quality." Šimulčík, *Zápas o nádej*, 41–52.

<sup>35</sup> Krčméry used the word "evolution" in describing the relationship between the Rodina and the secret church. Krčméry, interview.

ing number of communities and during the summer of 1974 they decided, as Jukl recalls, to “go a step further” with their spiritual activities by establishing Fatima.<sup>36</sup> Bishop Korec, who became one of its spiritual leaders, described Fatima as an organized body of the secret church’s leaders: “[dedicated] to founding, managing, propagating and coordinating the small Catholic communities of Catholic workers, youth and children.”<sup>37</sup>

In the following years, Fatima organized new movements within the Slovak secret church that offered Slovak Catholics of all ages and needs different activities and programs that they could not pursue in the official Catholic Church. The Lay Apostle Movement, the largest of the movements coordinated by Fatima, resembled the Rodina that Kolaković had founded in Slovakia during the Second World War. One former member of the secret church in Slovakia told political scientist Shari Cohen that as many as 20,000 people belonged to this movement.<sup>38</sup> It reflected Kolaković’s emphasis on the important role of laypeople, but targeted the specific spiritual needs of Slovakia’s Catholics by organizing them into different communities based on age. For example, the Movement of Christian Education for Children consisted of communities of fourteen to eighteen-year-olds. University-age Catholics belonged to communities in the Lay Apostle Youth Movement, and parents belonged to the Movement of the Christian Family. Ten to fifteen people belonged to each community, usually meeting at least once a week in a private apartment or home for Bible study, choir practice, or discussion; the activities varied, depending on the particular interests and age of a community within one of these movements.<sup>39</sup> A layperson organized and led the activities of each com-

<sup>36</sup> This young generation included Rudolf Fiby (b. 1946) and Eugen Valovič (b. 1949). Jukl explains that they made their plans while at a summer retreat in 1974. Šimulčík, *Zápas o nádej*, 54.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>38</sup> Cohen, *Politics Without a Past*, 63.

<sup>39</sup> Andrea Kuhajdová, a member of the Movement of Christian Education for Children in Bratislava in the late 1980s, explained this division of the communities by age. Andrea Kuhajdová, interview by author, Bratislava, Slovakia, 2 August 1996. Monika C., who led one of these communities in Bratislava in the 1980s, also described this organization and range of activities. Monika C., interview by author, Bratislava, Slovakia, 20 June 1996. For more on the spiritual emphasis of this movement, see Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť*, 131. A 1984 samizdat article described the general features of these communities: “Throughout the whole country, circles of believers have been created—especially among the youth—developing the most diverse sort of activities: they discuss books, study, pray, celebrate mass...and of course they write, print and distribute pamphlets and books.” “Situaciou cirkvi v Československa,” *Výber* 3 (1984): 50.

munity. Periodically, leaders of the communities met with a priest of the secret church to report their activities, news, problems or concerns. The priest would help these lay leaders develop spiritual exercises for their community and provide them with books and samizdat for distribution. Ján Šimulčík, a sixteen-year old student when he first joined the secret church in the 1980s, provides one of the few accounts of the structure that was created to coordinate the lay movements' activities. Within the university's communities, Šimulčík recalls "Students knew the [secret] priest only under a code-name. It was for his safety because also among university students were a lot of agents of the secret police."<sup>40</sup> The number of cities and towns in Slovakia holding these central meetings outside of Bratislava grew to ten in 1980 and seventeen by 1989.<sup>41</sup> Most of the secret church's ministry among university students took place in Bratislava, and František Mikloško coordinated the communities that existed within the university. Mikloško and the secret priests responsible for coordinating the communities reported to Bishop Korec.<sup>42</sup>

By supporting such a variety of activities, the lay communities of the Slovak secret church provided a vital avenue for Slovak Catholics to continue their spiritual development with fellow believers. Monika C. recounted the activities of two communities in the Movement of Christian Education for Children that she led in Bratislava when she was only thirteen years old. Her parents had been active in the secret church while students and they belonged to their own community within the Movement of the Christian family. About fifteen people her age belonged to each community, and they usually met on Fridays and Sundays in a private apartment. Although Monika C. formally led the groups, she explained that different members sometimes assumed the responsibility for planning the activities of a particular meeting. In addition to discussing the Bible, they talked about problems or news in their daily lives. Sometimes they met for choir practice, to have dinner at one of the member's homes, or to walk around downtown Bratislava together.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to the secret church's lay communities, the secret church organized several programs designed to overcome the state's restrictions on religion and provide for the specific spiritual needs of Slovakia's Catholics. One program focused on helping official and secret priests de-

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<sup>40</sup> Šimulčík, "God's Underground."

<sup>41</sup> Ján Šimulčík, text of lecture, 19 April 1996, CDM.

<sup>42</sup> Šimulčík, "God's Underground."

<sup>43</sup> Monika C., interview.

velop closer cooperation with one another. It later published a samizdat periodical, intended for priests, which contained uncensored news as well as the text of correspondence and papal encyclicals from the Vatican. Other programs involved seminars and spiritual exercises to help prepare Catholics for church work as lay ministers.<sup>44</sup>

As a religious revival gained momentum in Slovakia, the Slovak secret church became a more cohesive structure. Until 1985, Bishop Korec represented the primary link between these different strands of the secret church in Slovakia.<sup>45</sup> That year the leaders of the different programs began meeting directly with one another to share their ideas and experiences and to coordinate their activities. They also began meeting with representatives of the Greek Catholic Church. Although the state had successfully eliminated the Greek Catholic Church's formal structure in 1950, Greek Catholics had continued their faith in the underground until its reestablishment in 1968.<sup>46</sup> This was not the secret church's first contact with the Greek church, but it revived a connection that had been established in the 1940s, when the Greek Catholic Bishop Gojdic (who died while serving a prison sentence in 1960) and his auxiliary bishop Vasil Hopko had been members of Kolaković's Rodina.<sup>47</sup>

The secret church's relationship to the official church is complex. Although the secret church's leaders acknowledged that only a minority of Slovakia's believers belonged to its secret communities, this leadership never viewed their communities as a separate church. Ján Čarnogurský describes the line between the secret church and the official church as blurry, citing the fact that even official priests belonged to both communities.<sup>48</sup> In a 1983 letter to the editors of *Smena*, Ján Korec took issue with this official periodical's negative characterization of the secret church and explained the Slovak secret church's close relationship to the Catholic

<sup>44</sup> These programs (movements) included: Neocatechumen Movement, Renewal in the Holy Ghost Movement, Oasis Movement, Fokolare, and the Family of the Immaculate. For a more detailed description of each, see Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť*, 131–136. Juraj Kohutiar, a member of the lay apostolate movement, also described this range of activities. Juraj Kohutiar, interview by the author, Bratislava, Slovakia, 14 August 1997.

<sup>45</sup> Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť*, 132–133.

<sup>46</sup> "Greckokatolíci Československa a udalosti roku 1968," *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 3 (1988): 6–11.

<sup>47</sup> Mikloško included Bishops Goydic and Hopko in his list of Kolaković's Rodina. See Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť*, 159.

<sup>48</sup> See Ján Čarnogurský, "Tajne cirkev a pute na Slovensku," samizdat, October 1988, 3–4, KI: CZ ROM 2 Čarnogurský, Ján, and Pavel.

Church in Czechoslovakia and the Vatican: “The church has its officials and public religious services, but its believers also live a private religious life. If for thirty years some priest is not permitted to come to the altar, and must serve mass privately in private homes—and if not in private homes, but in the forest—it is not his fault. If believers pray together outside of the church, if they read something together from the Holy Bible, it does not represent some sort of secret church, but rather the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic church, united in spirit with the priests, bishops and with the throne of St. Peter.”<sup>49</sup> Although its leaders and members rarely used the term “secret church,” a secret church did exist in Slovakia. Many of Slovakia’s believers continued their faith secretly, but in doing so, they did not sever their ties with the Catholic Church. Ján Čarnogurský and Korec both use the designation “secret church” in *samizdat*, but they explain that there is only one church.<sup>50</sup> The Catholic secret church in Slovakia represented a sphere of religious activity parallel to the activities of the official Catholic Church in Slovakia. Within the secret church, the fundamental elements of organized religious life, such as worship, prayer, fellowship, and education could develop without many of the restrictions that hindered this activity in the official church. The secret church—as argued repeatedly by its leaders—was not distinct from the official church in the sense of adherence to Catholic doctrine as revealed by the Pope and the Vatican. To the contrary, it drew its strength from being part of the Catholic Church. The secret church created a community of believers that, by taking certain precautions and acknowledging certain limits, could worship freely and grow spiritually in its many communities and movements.

The secret church succeeded in evading state power and repression in several ways. Until the 1980s, it remained focused on the spiritual development of Catholics in Slovakia, rather than mobilizing politically against the state. It kept its activities underground by meeting secretly in private apartments in small groups rather than in open public gatherings. Overall, its leaders (Kolaković, Jukl, Krčméry, and Korec) took a very cautious and gradual approach to expanding the scope of its activities.

<sup>49</sup> This letter is dated October 10, 1983. *Una Sancta Catholica* Advent (1983): 25.

<sup>50</sup> See “Tajne cirkev” and *Informace o cirkvi* 8 (1986): 10.

## **Constructing Peace and Pursuing Reconciliation in the GDR**

Activists in the GDR had very different opportunities for independent activity than the Slovak Catholics. Because of the Evangelical Church's stronger institutional autonomy, East German Protestants had no such need to construct a free space for independent activity in the underground. Rather, the Evangelical Church supported grassroots initiatives dedicated to particular social issues that resulted in free spaces located within churches. Despite the institutional status of the Evangelical Church, the party-state's values pervaded many social issues that were important to East German Christians. In particular, many Protestants challenged the state's conception that peace was to be pursued through the strengthening of socialism through armed might. The foundation of Aktion Sühnezeichen (Action Signs of Reconciliation) in 1958 and the introduction of unarmed military service for conscientious objectors (known as Bausoldaten or construction soldiers) in 1964 represented two early arenas in which the Evangelical Church began using its resources to offer an alternative vision of peace.

The efforts of Aktion Sühnezeichen and the Bausoldaten were Christian responses to the destructive consequences of Nazism and the Second World War. Aktion Sühnezeichen looked toward this destructiveness of the past in an effort to atone for it in the present through acts of reconciliation with the victims of Nazism. As conscientious objectors, the Bausoldaten recognized that a future military conflict in Europe would be even more destructive than the Second World War. Aktion Sühnezeichen and the Bausoldaten recognized the distinct situation of "Germany" in the postwar period. Both were motivated by a desire to avoid future military conflicts and to preserve peace in the future. Though the party-state argued that de-Nazification was finished (and hence no more need for reconciliation) and socialism was the key to peace in the present and future, the Bausoldaten's focus on peace put them in line with some elements of the party-state's policies. As a result, the GDR became the only Soviet bloc state to have a legal option of unarmed military service for conscientious objectors. Though created out of accommodation with the party-state, both Aktion Sühnezeichen and the Bausoldaten created free spaces and promoted a vision of peace that did not conform with that of the party-state. As in Slovakia, there were limits to what could be done within the free spaces. Much of the work to promote peace by volunteers in Aktion Sühnezeichen and the Bausoldaten took place at the local level and the initiatives of each could differ by region and locality, depending on the level and type of support local clergy were willing to offer.



## Aktion Sühnezeichen

Aktion Sühnezeichen represented one of the Evangelical Church's earliest contributions to an independent peace movement in the GDR. Its founder, Lothar Kreyssig, had been active in the Confessing Church since 1934. Kreyssig was a Lutheran pastor trained as a lawyer, and he worked as a judge in a guardian court that was responsible for several hundred mentally disabled children and adults in a small town outside of Berlin. In 1940, Kreyssig had learned of the Nazi's systematic extermination of mentally and physically disabled people and he opposed this policy by filing charges against the officials at clinics where the euthanasia had occurred. He also informed the Minister of Justice in Berlin of what had happened, but the government forced him to step down from his position. After the war, Kreyssig felt that Christians and the Evangelical Church had not done enough to stop the atrocities that had been committed by the Nazis both at home and abroad.<sup>51</sup> At a synod meeting in 1958 Kreyssig served as a member of the governing board of the EKD and appealed for the foundation of an organization that would work for peace by actively atoning for the deeds of Nazi destruction. In an "appeal for peace," Kreyssig declared: "We, Germans, began the Second World War, and by this, more than anyone else, we are responsible for mankind's immeasurable suffering. Germans, in sinful rebellion against God, killed millions of Jews. Those of us alive today who had not wanted this, did not do enough to prevent it... We ask the nations who suffered from our violence to permit us, with our hands and resources, to do something good in your land. Let us build a village, a settlement, a church, a hospital or whatever else that you want for the public welfare as a sign of reconciliation."<sup>52</sup> Kreys-

<sup>51</sup> For an account of this early history of Aktion Sühnezeichen, see Ludwig Melhorn, "Die Zeit ist reif, daß sich die Geister scheiden: Versöhnungsdienste der Aktion Sühnezeichen," *Spuren: zur Geschichte der Friedensbewegung in der DDR*, Berlin, January 1988, 15, ABL. Friedrich Magirus, a pastor active in Aktion Sühnezeichen since 1964, served as its director from 1974–1982. Friedrich Magirus, interview by author, Leipzig, Germany, 25 October 2001; Stephan Bickhardt, interview by author, Leipzig, Germany, 11 May 2001. For a recent history of Aktion Sühnezeichen, both East and West, see Kammerer, *Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste*. For a biography of Kreyssig written by a colleague, see Weiß, *Lothar Kreyssig*.

<sup>52</sup> "Aufruf von Präses Kreyssig am 30. April 1958 zur Aktion Sühnezeichen," 30 April 1958, 1, ABL 3.18.2. Magirus explained that Kreyssig had the appeal in his bag and had planned to announce the formation of Aktion Sühnezeichen at the 1954 church congress in Leipzig, but decided that the situation was not right at that time. Magirus, interview.

sig hoped that Germans at least seventeen years of age and of all confessions would work for one year in Poland, the USSR, and Israel as a symbol of peace and reconciliation. Individuals not able to offer their physical labor were to make financial contributions to support the organization.<sup>53</sup> The synod supported Kreyssig's appeal and authorized the foundation of Aktion Sühnezeichen to implement this mission.

Aktion Sühnezeichen organized its activities within the space and protection offered by the Evangelical Church, and it was the first of such groups to receive this support from the church in the GDR. The Evangelical Church's Home Mission and Church Relief Agency in East Berlin sponsored Aktion Sühnezeichen. In the early 1960s, Kreyssig directed the work of Aktion Sühnezeichen out of a small office with one colleague and two office workers.<sup>54</sup> In addition to financial support from the church, Aktion Sühnezeichen received financial donations from individuals interested in supporting its work, and its publications usually provided information for making contributions through its bank account. Because it was administratively connected to the Evangelical Church, it enjoyed access to the Evangelical Church's buildings and publishing resources.

Kreyssig had intended Aktion Sühnezeichen to be an organization for both East and West Germans, but the political division of Germany, made more permanent with the construction of the Berlin wall in 1961, necessitated the establishment of two separate organizational structures.<sup>55</sup> In the GDR, the state refused Kreyssig's request for financial support, arguing that the Nazis were gone and that there was no need for reconciliation. Unable to finance a big program of sending volunteers abroad for lengthy one or two year periods as originally envisioned by Kreyssig, Aktion Sühnezeichen organized short two-week summer camps beginning in 1962.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> "Aufruf von Präses Kreyssig," 1–2.

<sup>54</sup> "Satzung der Aktion Sühnezeichen," no date, ABL 3.18.4. Magirius also described the small scale of its early administration. Magirius, interview.

<sup>55</sup> In West Germany, the organization adopted the name Aktion Sühnezeichen/Friedensdienst (Action Reconciliation/Service of Peace) and in 1959 sent its first volunteers to the Netherlands. Soon after, its volunteers helped build a synagogue in France, a water reservoir in Greece for a village destroyed during the war, and houses in Skopje, Yugoslavia, in an area destroyed by an earthquake. In 1961, it sent its first volunteers to Israel, where groups worked on a kibbutz and helped build an institute for the blind. Israel only permitted volunteers from Germany after the Eichmann trial in 1961. After the fall of the wall, the two German organizations of Aktion Sühnezeichen reunited under the name Aktion Sühnezeichen/Friedensdienst. Melhorn, "Die Zeit ist reif," 16; Bickhardt, interview.

<sup>56</sup> Magirius, interview.

The two-week summer camps offered a place where young people from eighteen to twenty-four years of age from the GDR and elsewhere in Central Europe could meet and work together for peace and reconciliation. At the first two summer camps in July and August 1962, seventy-two young people cleared away debris from one Catholic and two Lutheran churches in Magdeburg that had been destroyed during the Second World War.<sup>57</sup> State restrictions initially kept Aktion Sühnezeichen in the GDR working on religious projects related to social work. Each year participants could select from a variety of camps throughout the GDR, and each camp focused on a different project. Many projects focused on needs of various church-related communities and institutions, such as a Catholic home for the elderly in the Sorbian community near Kamenz.

By the mid-1960s, Aktion Sühnezeichen's projects became more oriented to the mission of atonement for the evils of Germany's Nazi past with East Germans traveling outside of the GDR to work in Poland and other countries that had experienced German aggression during the Second World War. During the summer of 1966, five Aktion Sühnezeichen groups traveled to Poland and worked at a variety of locations, including the former concentration camps in Auschwitz and Majdanek. That same year, two groups also traveled to Czechoslovakia to work at the Terezin concentration camp and at Lidice, the site of a village that had been completely destroyed by the Nazis during the war in retaliation for the assassination of the Reichprotector Reinhard Heydrich in Prague. Although the directors of each of these sites invited Aktion Sühnezeichen to return in 1967 and 1968, the state authorities refused to grant the required travel documents during these two years.<sup>58</sup> Projects within the GDR also became more oriented to the theme of atonement. For example, in 1975 participants at one summer camp spent the first week working at the concentration camp at Sachsenhausen and the second week

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<sup>57</sup> Särchen, an early leader of Aktion Sühnezeichen, recalled that first year of summer camps in his final speech as a member of the leadership circle in 1975 and identified Christian Schmidt, author of several articles about the history of the summer camps published by Aktion Sühnezeichen, as the person who organized the first year's camps. See Günter Särchen, "Mit Sühnezeichen unterwegs," *Monatsbrief*, (January/February 1976): 12, KI: GD 12/22.17. Christian Schmidt, "Seit 25 Jahren—Lagerdienste der Aktion Sühnezeichen," *Monatsbrief*, (October-November 1987): 7–8, ABL 3.18.7; Ludwig Melhorn, "Aktion Sühnezeichen stellt sich vor," *Monatsbrief*, (June 1980), 3, KI: GD 12/22.17.

<sup>58</sup> Christian Schmidt, "Mini-information über Aktion Sühnezeichen," 1968, 4, ABL 3.18.3

restoring a Jewish cemetery in Oranienburg. Other groups worked at holocaust memorials in Buchenwald, Ravensbrück and Mittelbau-Dora.<sup>59</sup>

In the early 1970s, Aktion Sühnezeichen again began sending young Germans outside of the GDR and it also began inviting young people from Poland, and later from Czechoslovakia and Hungary, to attend its summer camps in the GDR. In the fall of 1980, Polish travel restrictions temporarily ended Aktion Sühnezeichen's official contact with Poland. It was reestablished in 1987 when three East German groups went to work in hospitals for children in Warsaw and at the concentration camp in Majdanek.<sup>60</sup> In 1988, over ninety youth from Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia attended that year's summer camps in East Germany, and six groups of East Germans had been sent to Poland, some working at a Catholic home for blind children and others at the site of the Auschwitz concentration camp.<sup>61</sup>

Each of Aktion Sühnezeichen's summer camps coordinated a program that emphasized work as well as spiritual and intellectual development. Its brochures explained that participants should bring work clothes and solid shoes since they would be working six hours a day. Each summer camp focused on a specific theme, depending on the nature or subject of the work project. After the six hours of work, the camp leader led a lecture and discussion related to that particular service project or to other themes such as peace, military service or environmental problems. Despite the presence of this leader, one brochure explained that everyone is a "co-organizer of the community" and should bring musical instruments, songs, literature, dictionaries, and a Bible to the camps.<sup>62</sup> The expenses for running the summer camps were covered by donations and contributions made to Aktion Sühnezeichen's bank account.<sup>63</sup> Aktion Sühnezeichen also collected fifty marks from each person to cover travel expenses to and from the summer camp. By charging everyone a flat rate, the money saved

<sup>59</sup> Each year Aktion Sühnezeichen published a brochure describing the theme and information regarding the date and registration of the next year's summer camps. See *1975 Aktion Sühnezeichen*, 1975, KI: GD 12/22.17; *Lagerplan 1980 Aktion Sühnezeichen*, 1980, KI: GD 12/22.17; and *Sommerlager Aktion Sühnezeichen 1988*, 1988, ABL 3.18.9.

<sup>60</sup> "Aus dem Bericht des Leiters (gekürzt): Vorgetragen am 29.12.1987 auf dem Jahrestreffen," *Monatsbrief* (January/February 1988): 7, ABL 3.18.8.

<sup>61</sup> "Lagersommer 1988," *Monatsbrief*, (September 1988): 13, ABL 3.18.10.

<sup>62</sup> *Sommerlager Aktion Sühnezeichen 1988*, 8. Also, Magirius, interview.

<sup>63</sup> For an appeal for financial support, see "Spendenaufwurf," *Monatsbrief* (September 1988): 18, ABL 3.18.10.

by those having less distance to travel was used to cover the higher travel expenses of those traveling farther.<sup>64</sup>

Between 1962 and 1989, an increasing number of young people attended a greater variety of summer camps. Although Aktion Sühnezeichen had organized only two summer camps in its first year, by 1975 young people could choose among twenty-six different summer camps scheduled between June and August throughout East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. Aktion Sühnezeichen designated three of the camps that year as “youth camps” for sixteen to eighteen-year-olds and one as a “family camp” where entire families could work together on a rehabilitation center for children and youth.<sup>65</sup> The brochure of 1988’s summer camps included four summer camps of only one week in length as an effort to give young people who worked full time the opportunity to attend one of the camps.<sup>66</sup> In 1968 an information sheet by Aktion Sühnezeichen describing its first decade of activities reported that 2,000 young people had attended its 132 summer camps since 1962.<sup>67</sup> In the 1970s and 1980s, approximately 300–500 people attended the summer camps each year.<sup>68</sup> By 1987, Aktion Sühnezeichen reported that 12,461 young people had contributed their service through the summer camps since 1962.<sup>69</sup> Because Aktion Sühnezeichen could only publicize its work within the church, most participants came from church parishes. Friedrich Magirius, director of Aktion Sühnezeichen from 1974 to 1982, explained that young people could always register non-Christian friends for the summer camps, so each year the number of people not connected to the church, but interested in Aktion Sühnezeichen’s work, increased.<sup>70</sup>

Though the summer camps represented its most important activity, Aktion Sühnezeichen turned participation in a two-week summer camp into lifetime membership in a community dedicated to peace throughout the year. Through a monthly newsletter, Aktion Sühnezeichen informed this community of its activities and provided information about issues related

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<sup>64</sup> Magirius, interview. Each summer camp brochure also explained this use of the fee.

<sup>65</sup> 1975 *Aktion Sühnezeichen*.

<sup>66</sup> *Sommerlager Aktion Sühnezeichen 1988*, 3, 9.

<sup>67</sup> Schmidt, “Mini-Information über Aktion Sühnezeichen.”

<sup>68</sup> This range was cited in 1975 *Aktion Sühnezeichen*, 2; Särchen, “Mit Sühnezeichen unterwegs,” 14; *Sommerlager Aktion Sühnezeichen 1988*, 3; and “Lagersommer 1988,” 13. Magirius cited a much larger range of 500–600 participants each year. Magirius, interview.

<sup>69</sup> Schmidt, “Seit 25 Jahren,” 8.

<sup>70</sup> Magirius, interview.

to peace and human rights both within East Germany and elsewhere in the Soviet bloc. For example, in 1988, its newsletter reported that believers in Czechoslovakia had circulated a 31-point petition demanding greater religious freedom and respect for human rights and published the full text of this petition.<sup>71</sup>

One of the central activities of Aktion Sühnezeichen's community was a three-day *Jahrestreffen* (annual assembly) in East Berlin every December between Christmas and New Year's Eve. Anyone who had attended a summer camp, supported Aktion Sühnezeichen's work with a financial contribution, or was a "friend" of Aktion Sühnezeichen could attend the assembly. The first annual assembly had been held in 1964.<sup>72</sup> In subsequent years, the annual assembly provided a venue where Action Sühnezeichen sustained its leadership and, more importantly, where former camp participants and supporters could develop a sense of community by renewing old friendships, sharing experiences with fellow travelers, and learning about the organization's work over the past year.<sup>73</sup> Activities for the annual assembly included lectures, group discussions, exhibitions and other activities designed to advance the community's awareness of peace.

The annual assembly represented more than just a gathering of like-minded people, rather it was one of the main organs of Aktion Sühnezeichen and elected the leaders who coordinated its work. Eligible voters included anyone attending the meeting who had attended a summer camp or had contributed financial support to the organization's work. Participants elected Aktion Sühnezeichen's director to a five-year term, and members of a ten-person leadership circle serving two-year terms could also be up for election at the annual assembly. According to its statutes, the leadership circle had to include representatives from the Catholic Church, as well as from Aktion Sühnezeichen's sponsor, the Home Mission and Church Relief Agency.<sup>74</sup> A 1968 information sheet indicated that 200–300 people usually participated in the annual assembly.<sup>75</sup> Though more precise numbers for later years were not available, evidence from

<sup>71</sup> "Initiative der Katholiken zur Lösung der Situation der gläubigen Bürger der CSSR," *Monatsbrief* (September 1988): 7–10, ABL 3.18.10.

<sup>72</sup> Särchen served as director of Aktion Sühnezeichen in 1964 when that first annual assembly was held. Särchen, "Mit Sühnezeichen unterwegs," 12.

<sup>73</sup> Schmidt, "Mini-Information über Aktion Sühnezeichen," 3; 1975 *Aktion Sühnezeichen*, 2; Friedrich Magirius, *Aktion Sühnezeichen*, pamphlet, 1986, 14, ABL 3.18.6.; "Satzung der Aktion Sühnezeichen," 1.

<sup>74</sup> "Satzung der Aktion Sühnezeichen," 1–2.

<sup>75</sup> Schmidt, "Mini-Information über Aktion Sühnezeichen," 3.

accounts of the annual meeting published in its monthly newsletter suggest that several hundred people probably attended each year.<sup>76</sup>

Not every summer camp participant or supporter attended this annual event, but accounts in its monthly newsletter provided descriptions of each year's assembly activities, including the text of the annual report given by the director and the lectures presented at the gathering. These materials indicate the broad scope of Aktion Sühnezeichen's activities and its close association with the Evangelical Church. For example, at the 1979 annual assembly Joachim Garstecki, Director of Peace Issues of the Kirchenbund, presented the main lecture that examined how Aktion Sühnezeichen's commitment to atonement was in line with other peace initiatives in the GDR.<sup>77</sup> Other activities during that year's two-day event included a lecture by a Polish theologian from Warsaw titled "Reconciliation in the Bible and in life," discussion groups, and a song hour. Participants could also view an exhibition about *Kristallnacht* titled "Shalom" and browse books for sale. Most of the activities took place in the community room of the Elizabeth Church, and the assembly concluded with an ecumenical service at the *Friedenskirche* in East Berlin.<sup>78</sup> The annual assembly provided an opportunity for former summer camp participants, supporters and friends of Aktion Sühnezeichen from all over the GDR to meet and develop new ties. The annual assembly signified Aktion Sühnezeichen's commitment to building a community of East Germans willing to work for peace in their daily lives.

The summer camps and the annual assembly facilitated the formation of regional groups in towns and cities that met and carried out the work of Aktion Sühnezeichen throughout the year. According to its statutes, regional groups could introduce motions and questions for discussion at the annual assembly.<sup>79</sup> Aktion Sühnezeichen therefore recognized the official status of regional groups and helped publicize their meetings and activities in its newsletter, but it did not actively organize these groups or finance their activities. Rather, individuals who wanted to continue the work of Aktion Sühnezeichen at the local level took the initiative to establish re-

<sup>76</sup> A 1980 account reported 100 more people attended the 1979 assembly than the previous year. Unfortunately, it does not indicate the total number of either year. *Monatsbrief* (January/February 1980): 11, KI: GD 12/22.17.

<sup>77</sup> Joachim Garstecki, "Heute die nötigen Schritte tun—Menschen auf dem Weg zueinander," *Monatsbrief* (January/February 1980): 3–11, KI: GD 12/22.17.

<sup>78</sup> "Rückblick Jahrestreffen," *Monatsbrief* (January/February 1980): 11–12, KI: GD 12/22.17.

<sup>79</sup> "Satzung der Aktion Sühnezeichen," 1.

gional groups that were usually based in a particular town or city. Not every town or city had a regional group, and their activities and membership varied.<sup>80</sup> The total number of regional groups and the total number of people active in these groups before 1989 is unclear, since any individuals who had been active in or simply interested in Aktion Sühnezeichen could meet formally or informally.

Aktion Sühnezeichen's April/May 1979 newsletter reports on the activities of regional groups in Dresden, Magdeburg, and Karl-Marx-Stadt, and reveals the diversity and commitment of these three groups. The report from Dresden, describing its activities in 1978, indicates that this group was quite large and active. That year, its members had volunteered in a church hospital, a home for mentally disabled children, and a home for senior citizens. The group met four to five times a year. The topics discussed at that year's meetings included: the situation in Chile (led by two Chilean visitors to the city); *Kristallnacht* and conditions in the Third Reich in which a member of the Jewish community participated; and how the church and Christians in East Germany could advance peace education. The author of this report, an organizer of the Dresden group, explained that their group provided a means for people not able to participate in the summer camps due to health or other reasons to contribute to the work of Aktion Sühnezeichen. Towards this end, it had begun to invite families with children to attend its meetings. The report also explained that the main goals of this regional group were to publicize the work of Aktion Sühnezeichen by making information about its activities available and by setting an example for society through its own work in Dresden. Its goals also included assisting in the summer camps in the region and continuing the thematic goals outlined each year at the annual assembly and at the summer camps. Although the report provided no information about the size of this group, it suggested that it was relatively large by describing the need to establish a smaller group of members that would be responsible for organizing the group's activities. One difficulty this group faced, according to the report, was a high turnover rate of its members, which the author attributed to the fact that the group did not meet more frequently.<sup>81</sup>

In contrast to the extensive activities of the regional group in Dresden, reports on the activities of the regional groups in Magdeburg and Karl-Marx-Stadt that same year indicate that they were in a much earlier stage

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<sup>80</sup> Magirius refers to this inconsistent character of regional groups. Magirius "Aktion Sühnezeichen," 14.

<sup>81</sup> "Aus unseren Bezirksgruppen," *Monatsbrief* (April/May 1979): 6-7, KI: GD 12/22.17.



of development at that time and not able to pursue the same level of work. While residents of Magdeburg had participated in Aktion Sühnezeichen since its foundation (Magdeburg had hosted the first two summer camps in 1962), a regional group in that city had been founded only in February 1979 by four young people who had recently participated in a summer camp. They held their first meeting in a church community room with other people who had attended a summer camp who were interested in working within a regional group. One of their first activities had been to take a group of mentally disabled children to an amusement park. The group in Karl-Marx-Stadt had been founded two years earlier by members who wanted to maintain contact between the summer camps and the annual assembly, so it met once each fall and spring. The members of this group reported that they had just spent a weekend at a church in the nearby town of Geyer that was without a pastor. On Saturday they had performed skits and organized other activities for thirty Sunday school children that explored the theme of "hate." The next day they led the Sunday service and reported that this weekend gave them the opportunity not only to discuss issues in small groups within the church, but also to speak about Aktion Sühnezeichen and the summer camps.<sup>82</sup>

Unlike the summer camps and the annual assembly, which were planned and organized by Aktion Sühnezeichen, the regional groups formed organically and demonstrated how individuals could be inspired by their experience with Aktion Sühnezeichen to continue its work at the local level. The emergence of regional groups also illustrates that the work of Aktion Sühnezeichen extended beyond its original parameters and continued to receive the Evangelical Church's support and protection.

Pastor Friedrich Magirus, who had been active with Aktion Sühnezeichen since meeting Kreyssig in 1964 and had directed the organization from 1974 to 1982, acknowledged that only a small minority of East Germans had participated in Aktion Sühnezeichen's activities. He argued, however, that those who did participate found an opportunity to think freely. Magirus explained this importance: "I have always thought that freedom must not come from travel freedom alone, but also the freedom to think."<sup>83</sup> After stepping down as director of Aktion Sühnezeichen in 1982, Magirus returned to full-time service in the Evangelical Church by accepting an administrative position from the church to serve as a superintendent in the city of Leipzig.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 7–8.

<sup>83</sup> Magirus, interview.

Aktion Sühnezeichen joins the Catholic University in Lublin, Catholic Intelligentsia Clubs (in Warsaw, Kraków, Toruń, Poznań, and Wrocław) and the independent Catholic weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* (General weekly) in Poland as among the few such legal alternatives to state and party organizations that existed elsewhere in the Soviet bloc. In Poland, these religious organizations and periodicals had regained independence as concessions made by Gomułka as part of what Sabrina Ramet refers to as “the truce” between church and the party-state to stabilize Poland and avoid Soviet intervention following the Polish October in 1956.<sup>84</sup> However, rather than the product of negotiations between church and state or even a period of liberalization (as the Prague Spring had resulted in many such non-party structures for Czechs and Slovaks briefly in 1968), Aktion Sühnezeichen began as an initiative from within the Evangelical Church and continued its summer camps and volunteer activities throughout the existence of the GDR. Lothar Kreyszig’s decision to wait and present his proposals to the synod in 1958 appears more driven by changes in the climate within the church leadership than by changes in the political context. In contrast, the other major peace effort of the Evangelical Church—an alternative to armed military service for conscientious objectors—was introduced by the party-state.

### **Bausoldaten: Unarmed Military Service**

On September 7, 1964, the East German government issued a decree permitting young men to fulfill their obligatory military duty without carrying a weapon by serving in construction units within the National Peoples Army (NVA).<sup>85</sup> In November 1964, the first 220 conscripts began their military service as Bausoldaten (construction soldiers).<sup>86</sup> The Bausoldaten served the same length of service (eighteen months) as regular draftees, received the same pay, lived in military barracks, and, with the exception of the symbol of a spade on their epaulettes, wore military uniforms similar to those of armed recruits.<sup>87</sup> The 1964 decree provided a legal means

<sup>84</sup> Ramet, *Nihil Obstat*, 33.

<sup>85</sup> “Gesetzblatt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republic,” Berlin, 16 September 1964, 129–130, private collection of Heinz Bächer, [hereafter PA–HB] file: “Gesetzblätter—Allgemein.”

<sup>86</sup> Koch and Eschler, *Zähne hoch Kopf zusammenbeissen*, 16.

<sup>87</sup> “Gesetzblatt,” 129; Heinz Bächer, interview by author, Jena, Germany, 10 November 2001.

for conscientious objectors to avoid armed military service and demonstrate resistance to the increased militarization of the GDR that followed the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961.

With this decree, the GDR became the only Warsaw Pact country to offer conscientious objectors a legal alternative to armed military service.<sup>88</sup> Bausoldaten service, however, damaged the education and career opportunities of conscientious objectors that selected this option, and the state did little to promote service in these units. All of the former Bausoldaten interviewed for this research indicated that they had difficulty getting into universities, attributing it to their choice of unarmed military service. Church leaders offered whatever limited support was available to help them make the difficult transition into civilian life afterwards and many former Bausoldaten found admission to the church's seminaries a means of pursuing professional careers. In other cases, the church hired former Bausoldaten to work as cemetery sextons or in its social services. Many former Bausoldaten appear to have been under Stasi (Ministry for State Security) surveillance, though it is difficult to discern whether the surveillance was a result of simply having completed unarmed military service or a result of their later involvement in grassroots peace initiatives and networking.

An estimated 12,000 to 17,000 men served as Bausoldaten between 1964 and 1990.<sup>89</sup> Despite their small percentage of total recruits, former Bausoldaten often continued their commitment to peace in civilian life. They formed networks with fellow Bausoldaten, established regional groups, organized public events promoting peace, and encouraged young men to reject armed military service. The Evangelical Church, through pastors at the local level, assisted in many of these endeavors and helped the former Bausoldaten become important pioneers in the East German peace movement well before its blossoming in the early 1980s.

The NVA permitted the formation of Bausoldat units after the Evangelical Church and public pressure pushed for an alternative to compulsory armed military service that had been introduced in 1962. An estimated 1,200 to 2,000 young men, including about 200 theology students, pastors, and church employees, immediately declared their refusal to be

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<sup>88</sup> Sandford, *The Sword and the Ploughshare*, 29.

<sup>89</sup> Estimates have varied. For an explanation of this range see Eisenfeld and Schicketanz, *Bausoldaten in der DDR*, 348–350. Joachim Garstecki indicated that there are estimates as high as 20,000 in his address at the Bausoldat Congress in September 1964. *Zivilcourage und Kompromiß*, 16.

conscripted.<sup>90</sup> Many accounts identify Bishop Moritz Mitzenheim's (head of the Thuringian Landeskirche) as having played an important role in the state's introduction of Bausoldat service.<sup>91</sup> On March 12, 1962, Bishops Friedrich Wilhelm Krummacker (Bishop of the Greifswald Landeskirche and chair of the East German Bishops' Conference) and Mitzenheim met with Willi Stoph (acting Chair of the Council of Ministers), Hans Seigewasser (State Secretary for Church Questions) and other high level state representatives to discuss the rights of Christians according to the obligatory military service decree. The bishops presented the state representatives with an eight page memorandum detailing specific concerns regarding obligatory military service, including the request that some form of legal alternative service be found for conscientious objectors who refused "military service for reasons of religion and conscience."<sup>92</sup> With the exception of placing conscientious objectors in units of the National People's Army, the September 7, 1964 decree that created the Bausoldat option closely resembles the proposal the bishops made in their March 12, 1962 meeting.

The party-state's motives for introducing this alternative to armed military service can be inferred from internal communications that followed its introduction. For example, in a letter to the new Chair of the Council of Ministers Willi Stoph shortly after the Bausoldat decree was introduced, Hans Seigewasser made recommendations on how to respond to recent criticisms from Bishop Noth of the Landeskirche Saxony regarding the military nature of Bausoldat service. Seigewasser wrote: "The orders of the National Defense Council on 7 September 1964 must therefore also be considered by the church as a further conclusive evidence of the humanistic attitude of the policy of the government of the GDR. In this sense, the regulation has been understood well beyond the borders of the GDR also."<sup>93</sup> Certainly, the other Soviet bloc states could make the same arguments about the relationship between socialism and peace and the necessity for a strong military in the face of western "aggression." However, the

<sup>90</sup> Koch and Eschler, *Zähne hoch Kopf zusammenbeissen*, 20–21.

<sup>91</sup> Eppelmann references negotiations involving Mitzenheim. See Philipsen, *We Were the People*, 60. Goeckel identified Bishop Mitzenheim of the Thuringian Landeskirche as one of the most progressive church leaders in the GDR, and therefore an official with whom the GDR was willing to negotiate. Goeckel, *The Lutheran Church*, 60.

<sup>92</sup> "Sehr geehrter Herr Vorsitzender des Ministerrats," Berlin, March 12, 1962, p. 6, EZA 104/630.

<sup>93</sup> Hans Seigewasser to Willi Stoph, November 2, 1964, Bundesarchiv [hereafter BA] DO 4/478, 2.

GDR also responded to the burden of German responsibility for initiating the destructive Second World War. An alternative service for conscientious objectors gave East Germany a point of differentiation that it could emphasize in distinguishing itself not only from West Germany, but also from the other Soviet bloc states. In other words, it was a state taking the lead in the pursuit of peace. East German news articles about the new Bausoldat units that were published in the official media emphasized this theme in the weeks following the introduction of the decree.<sup>94</sup>

In the September 7, 1964 decree, the party-state conceded that religious belief was a basis for refusing armed military service. According to article four, “such conscripts refusing armed military service will enlist in the construction units on the grounds of religious views or similar reasons.”<sup>95</sup> Recruits had to declare before their district draft board, orally or in writing, the specific grounds for selecting unarmed military service. Although some conscientious objectors submitted copies of these letters to their local church office, sometimes receiving a letter of support from their local pastor, several former Bausoldaten explained that the primary responsibility fell on the individual recruit to explain his own case for serving with the Bausoldaten. The draft board had the power to reject or accept this request.<sup>96</sup>

The Bausoldat units belonged to the NVA and their service retained a strong military orientation. The 1964 decree had broadly defined three categories of work to be carried out by the Bausoldaten: “a) assistance in the construction of street and traffic structures, as well the development of defensive and other military facilities, b) the disposal of equipment damaged during exercises, c) deployment at times of catastrophe.” During

<sup>94</sup> See for example “Neue Einheiten der NVA,” *Tribüne*, September 30, 1964, pg. 6, EZA 104/631; “Warum werden bei uns Baupionierbataillone gebildet?” *Jünger Welt*, October 22, 1964, EZA 104/631; and “Was sind Bausoldaten?” *Neues Deutschland*, November 26, 1964, EZA 104/632.

<sup>95</sup> “Gesetzblatt,” 129.

<sup>96</sup> Leipzig’s Jugendpfarramt archive has a specific file related to military service that contained copies of several letters requesting service in the Bausoldaten units. For one such declaration, see letter to NVA dated 26 October 1989, SLWA: 6.4, Wehrdienst, 1961–1990. In a letter supporting this individual’s appeal, Superintendent Richter explained that for a long time he had been aware of the individual’s belief against armed military service. Letter to NVA dated 26 October 1989, SLWA: 6.4, Wehrdienst, 1961–1990. Several former Bausoldaten recalled that they were on their own (without church assistance) to make their case before the draft boards. Bächer, interview; Helmut Wolff, interview by author, Leipzig, Germany, 12 November 2001; Helmut Nitzsche, interview by author, Leipzig, Germany, 12 November 2001.

their training, the Bausoldaten received political indoctrination as well as instruction in military regulations, defense skills, and first aid. They also received military physical training, but participated in drill exercises without weapons.<sup>97</sup> Rather than helping build the army's defensive infrastructure, many within the church and the Bausoldaten hoped for a new alternative where young men could fulfill their service by working in the health and social services.<sup>98</sup>

Even during their service, many Bausoldaten actively promoted peace and criticized the military nature of their service. One of the earliest conflicts focused on the wording of the oath of allegiance. At the start of their service, the state required the Bausoldaten to swear to contribute to the defensive capabilities of the National Peoples Army and the victory of socialism against the enemy.<sup>99</sup> For many Bausoldaten, this oath contradicted their pacifist principles.<sup>100</sup> Several, such as Rainer Eppelmann, refused to take this oath and served prison time in addition to their full eighteen months of service.<sup>101</sup> At the end of 1964, the Conference of Evangelical Church Leaders of the EKD established a group of experts to focus on questions related to military and alternative military service.<sup>102</sup> In 1965, this group, the Working Circle for Military Service Questions, introduced a set of guidelines for providing pastoral care to military conscripts. The Working Group argued that: "The alternative military service in the construction units is not considered by many that currently serve in them (about 220, of which about three-fourths are Protestant) a satisfactory solution to their specific concerns about military service." The Working Group pointed to the oath as an example of one of many ways that Christians were forced to compromise their beliefs on a daily basis.<sup>103</sup> In addition to advocating for the rights of conscientious objectors and critiquing the shortcomings of Bausoldat service, the guidelines outlined questions for church workers to use when counseling young men about to enter the military. The questions called for reflection on the consequences

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<sup>97</sup> "Gesetzblatt," 129.

<sup>98</sup> Ehring and Dallwitz, *Schwerter zu Pflugsharen*, 120–137. Goeckel's discussion of the Bausoldaten also focuses on these shortcomings. Goeckel, *The Lutheran Church*, 187.

<sup>99</sup> "Gesetzblatt," 130.

<sup>100</sup> Ehring and Dallwitz, *Schwerter zu Pflugsharen*, 123–125. See also Koch and Eschler, *Zähne hoch Kopf zusammenbeissen*, 22.

<sup>101</sup> Philipsen, *We Were the People*, 61.

<sup>102</sup> Koch and Eschler, *Zähne hoch Kopf zusammenbeissen*, 23–24.

<sup>103</sup> "Zum Friedensdienst der Kirche: Eine Handreichung für Seelsorge an Wehrpflichtigen," [approved November 1, 1965], BA SAPMO DY 30/IV A2/14/6, 13.

of serving in armed versus unarmed military units.<sup>104</sup> On November 1, 1965 the Bishops Conference approved the guidelines and began distributing them within each Landeskirche. In a December 28, 1965 internal position paper, the party-state outlined an argument that it would convey to the church leadership throughout the spring of 1966: that the guidelines were designed “to paralyze the defense preparedness of the GDR.”<sup>105</sup> The church leadership refused to withdraw the guidelines.<sup>106</sup>

As it became apparent that further concessions from the party-state for conscientious objectors were unlikely, Bausoldaten continued to articulate the shortcomings of their service and their commitment to peace. On March 2, 1966, a group identifying itself as a “brotherly circle of Prenzlau Bausoldaten” asked all Christians to work for the preservation of peace in response to the increased armament of East Germany. They asked parents not buy military toys for their children. They also appealed to women and girls to refuse to participate in shooting and other military-like exercises if training for work in the Red Cross, and to draftees about to begin their military service to rethink whether they as Christians could accept the military’s oath of allegiance.<sup>107</sup> In May 1966, a group of Bausoldaten stationed at the town of Garz issued a report on the shortcomings of the 1964 decree. They were particularly critical of the fact that much of their service contributed to the development of military projects. They sent copies of their report to several universities in East Germany, including Humboldt Universität in East Berlin and Karl Marx Universität in Leipzig.<sup>108</sup>

After completing their service in 1966, thirty-nine members of the first generation of Bausoldaten sent a letter to Christian conscientious objectors in the United States offering their solidarity and hope for a peaceful resolution to the war in Vietnam:

With great hope, we young Christians and opponents of military service in the GDR have watched pastor Martin Luther King’s nonviolent struggle for the civil rights of colored people. We believe that from this case of Christian responsibility, an example and model has developed of how man can resolve political conflicts without the dan-

<sup>104</sup> “Zum Friedensdienst der Kirche,” 18–19.

<sup>105</sup> “Argumentation zur Handreichung ‘Zum Friedensdienst der Kirche’—eine Handreichung für Seelsorge an Wehrpflichtigen,” December 28, 1965, BA DO 4/576, 5–6.

<sup>106</sup> Evangelical Church leadership to H. Seigewasser, June 29, 1966, EZA 104/633, 1–2.

<sup>107</sup> “An alle Christen,” March 2, 1966, MDA TH 07C, 1–2.

<sup>108</sup> Ehring and Dallwitz, *Schwerter zu Pflugscharen*, 125, 128. John Sandford, in a 1992 article, attributes the shortcomings of Bausoldaten service as an “identifiable cause that welded together both current and ex-Bausoldaten.” Sandford, “The Peace Movement,” 132.

gerous use of military power in the era of the atomic bomb. The politics of your government in Vietnam ruin this hope and put us all in danger. This fills us with worry. As conscientious objectors, we have a particular responsibility for these questions. As Christians, we are obligated to share the peace that Jesus Christ gave us on the cross with others. So we must work together to find constructive proposals for new channels of international cooperation.

For these former Bausoldaten, their commitment to peace extended beyond their rejection of armed military service—they connected their Christian beliefs to their pacifism and argued that conscientious objectors had a responsibility to publicly engage political issues related to peace. From their reference to Martin Luther King's work in the United States, it is clear that these former Bausoldaten viewed their work for peace as a social struggle that would require seeking change from the state as well as change from within society itself. The authors also demonstrated their support for the Evangelical Church's position by supporting recent declarations made by the Evangelical Church for peace in Vietnam.<sup>109</sup>

In 1969 and 1970 Bausoldaten reiterated their commitment to changing the military nature of their service by offering an additional (nineteenth) month of service as volunteers in a civil service project. The Minister of Defense rejected this plan, which became known as "Operation Nineteenth Month."<sup>110</sup> Units stationed at Saßnitz organized a nineteenth month of voluntary service at the end of their tour of duty. In March 1970, they sent a proposal to Bausoldaten units stationed elsewhere in the GDR to meet for fourteen days in November to work on some project together. The Saßnitz Bausoldaten suggested finding a construction site, a youth project or some sort of community work and, if that failed, to work with Aktion Sühnezeichen or on a church building project. They concluded their proposal by explaining that this activity should be open to everyone and that Bausoldaten should submit the addresses of former Bausoldaten so that they could be invited too.<sup>111</sup> This effort to establish a nineteenth month of civil service reflects a strategy of working for gradual change. Although the nineteenth month did not receive official support, the Bausoldaten still organized it. In both 1970 and 1972, about fifty former Bau-

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<sup>109</sup> Eisenfeld, *Kriegsdienstverweigerung in der DDR*, document 40. The former Bausoldaten sent copies of this letter to four Christian organizations in the United States that supported conscientious objectors, as well as a copy to the Secretariat of Church Questions in the GDR. *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>110</sup> See document 36 in Eisenfeld's appendix. See also *ibid.*, 97.

<sup>111</sup> For the text of their proposal see *ibid.*, document 35.



soldaten completed this voluntary service by working on a construction site and a sewage plant.<sup>112</sup> The proposal by the Saßnitz Bausoldaten hints at the role that networks between active and former Bausoldaten played in organizing peace activities. In advocating a nineteenth month of service, the Saßnitz Bausoldaten pointed out, “we will be able to get to know one another during this action and discuss possibilities for further common activities in our civilian life.”<sup>113</sup> Although marginalized from society, these networks provided moral and intellectual support to the Bausoldaten during and after their service. From 1964 to 1973, the NVA stationed the Bausoldaten in four large concentrations throughout the GDR: Bärenstein, near Karl-Marx-Stadt; Saßnitz, with a field camp at Stralsund-Därholm in the Rostock region; and Garz/Rügen and Prenzlau, both in the Neubrandenburg region.<sup>114</sup> In these larger units, the Bausoldaten organized bible studies and looked for opportunities to share their pacifism with the regular troops.<sup>115</sup> In 1974, probably hoping to reduce their visibility, the NVA broke these large concentrations of Bausoldaten into units of ten to fifteen men stationed throughout the country.<sup>116</sup>

The restructuring into smaller units did not impair the development of the Bausoldaten’s peace activities and networks. The activities within the small Bausoldat unit in Prora in the late 1970s reveals their extent. The Bausoldaten stationed at Prora, located in the northern part of the GDR, performed maintenance work for one of the military’s rest and recreation centers. Heinz Bächer, one of seventeen Bausoldaten deployed at this center from November 1977 until May 1979, explained that they had a good posting compared to other units that provided more direct support to the armed troops.<sup>117</sup> Although they came from a variety of backgrounds, most were Christians from a number of confessions and had become Bausoldaten on primarily religious grounds. The remainder had opposed armed military service for humanistic reasons. This group described their activities in an undated report intended for distribution among other Bausoldat units. According to this report, the group tried to meet twice a week: on Mondays for bible study and prayer and on Thursdays to discuss news, books or particular themes. The Prora Bausoldaten went on to ex-

<sup>112</sup> Neither of the efforts yielded a response from the government. Ibid., 97.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., document 35.

<sup>114</sup> Koch and Eschler, *Zähne hoch Kopf zusammenbeißen*, 23.

<sup>115</sup> Goeckel, *The Lutheran Church*, 238.

<sup>116</sup> In 1983, the state again stationed the Bausoldaten in larger groups, but at large industrial projects. Koch and Eschler, *Zähne hoch Kopf zusammenbeißen*, 17–23.

<sup>117</sup> Bächer, interview.

plain: "We are not only endeavoring to live and make do with one another, but rather to make an outward sign of our peace service. So we try to use every opportunity to conduct educational work, be it on days off, on holidays, or during train trips."<sup>118</sup>

Bächer and a fellow Bausoldat in this unit frequently used their free time to promote their vision of peace in the community. They explained their constructive view of service in a letter sent to other units: "As Bausoldaten, we do not only refuse something, but lead a constructive service for peace."<sup>119</sup> They wrote to local churches requesting permission to visit and lead an information session about Bausoldat service for young men and their families. During these visits they explained why they had decided to become Bausoldaten, described what the young men could expect to do as Bausoldaten, and recommended literature on peace and military service.<sup>120</sup> In addition, they provided young men with copies of the legal provisions for Bausoldat service, which could otherwise be difficult to obtain. The instructions for applying for service with the Bausoldaten had to be requested in writing and purchased from the NVA. Bächer explained that sometimes the NVA never processed these requests, and that it was important for the recruit to have a copy of the regulations in hand when declaring intent to serve as a Bausoldat so that the draft board official could not deny that such an option existed. He continually wrote the NVA for copies of the regulations that he could distribute.<sup>121</sup> The activities of the Prora Bausoldaten, and in particular those of Heinz Bächer, are only one example of how the Bausoldaten promoted peace through their activism during their deployment. With church support, they met with young men in the surrounding communities and shared their experiences and information about Bausoldaten. In doing so, they worked to overcome the state's efforts to limit the number of people who selected this option.

The Bausoldaten actively maintained close contact with Bausoldaten deployed in other units and those who had already completed their ser-

<sup>118</sup> "Bericht über unsere Situation hier in Prora auf Rügen," no date, PA-HB: file not labeled [hereafter Prora Bausoldaten].

<sup>119</sup> Letter from Bausoldat Heinz Bächer and Bausoldat Andreas Geyer, no date, handwritten copy of two page letter, PA-HB: Prora Bausoldaten.

<sup>120</sup> Bächer, interview. Bächer's private files contained text and notes of the presentations that they made during these visits. Presentation notes about Bausoldaten service, no date, PA-HB: Prora Bausoldaten.

<sup>121</sup> Bächer offered this explanation after I asked him why he had a file in his personal archives (PA-HB: Gesetzblätter, Allgemein) filled with copies of the regulations for applying for Bausoldat service. Bächer, interview.

vice. In a report of their peace work that the Prora Bausoldaten sent to other Bausoldat units was a cover letter and two-page address list of 175 known Bausoldaten. It also identified the different military posts where they were stationed. The cover letter explained that the list was not complete and requested that information about names not included on the list should be sent to the Prora Bausoldaten. The cover letter included the reminder, “after eighteen months of [Bausoldat service] everything is not finished” and concludes, “Please notify us also of your civil addresses and confession... This is important so that we can remain in personal contact outside after the eighteen months.”<sup>122</sup> During their service, the Prora Bausoldaten corresponded with Bausoldaten in other units and used these contacts to build their own address list so that they could stay in contact with one another after completing their service. The Prora Bausoldaten also received similar reports and address lists from other Bausoldaten units. In March 1978, the Bausoldaten stationed at Königs Wusterhausen sent the Prora Bausoldaten a sixteen-page report of their own activities that concluded with a list of names and civil addresses of ninety men who had just completed their service and where they had been stationed. This address list also included the same detailed information for thirty-two current Bausoldaten.<sup>123</sup>

The state did little to publicize the fact that young men had the option of refusing armed military service. Heinz Bächer recalled that many of the regular army recruits he met during his service did not know what the shovel on his epaulette meant and had never heard that there was the option of unarmed service.<sup>124</sup> Eppelmann explained that, in response to this problem, “the Protestant church had to make a major effort to inform people about these possibilities. They also had to hope for a change of consciousness among the population because very few people initially chose to refuse armed military service.”<sup>125</sup> While Eppelmann described this as a task for the church, evidence from the Prora Bausoldaten indicates that it was the Bausoldaten themselves who organized activities, sometimes with the support of the church, designed to build a greater awareness of peace issues amongst East Germans.

<sup>122</sup> Letter from Prora Bausoldaten, no date, 1–2, PA–HB: Prora Bausoldaten and “Adressen den Bausoldaten (noch unvollständig),” no date, 4–5, PA–HB: Prora Bausoldaten.

<sup>123</sup> Letter from Königs Wusterhausen Bausoldaten, March 1978, PA–HB–Prora Bausoldaten.

<sup>124</sup> Bächer, interview.

<sup>125</sup> Philipsen, *We Were the People*, 60.

In 1978, a former Bausoldat named Bernd Eisenfeld, published an edited volume on the construction soldiers that includes the findings of a detailed questionnaire that he used to survey the demographic background and motives of 360 individuals who had served in the first six generations of Bausoldaten between 1964 and 1973.<sup>126</sup> According to the responses in his sample, the majority of Bausoldaten during this period were workers or craftsmen when they enlisted (seventy-four percent), Lutherans (sixty-six percent), and sought unarmed military service primarily for religious reasons (seventy-one percent). Twelve percent were students and eight percent were church workers. Seven percent did not have any confessional background and twenty-six percent explained that they became Bausoldaten primarily for humanistic, ethical, or oppositional reasons.<sup>127</sup> These statistics highlight the fact that most Bausoldaten were Lutherans whose conscientious objection was based on religious belief. This association with the Evangelical Church was reinforced after the Bausoldaten returned to civilian life. Evidence from local church records indicates that some former Bausoldaten applied for work within their church parish.<sup>128</sup> Ekkehard Vollbach, a pastor in Leipzig in the 1980s, explained that pastors offered former Bausoldaten work or other means of support whenever possible, but that the church had limited resources.<sup>129</sup> Study at a theological seminary was one of the few ways that a former Bausoldat could receive an advanced education because of the discrimination they faced.

The 1964 decree had created new problems and challenges for the state, the Evangelical Church, and conscientious objectors. For the church and conscientious objectors, the desire for a non-military alternative service remained a partially unfulfilled goal. Though the state succeeded in keeping the number of young men opting for service with the Bausoldaten low, many who did become Bausoldaten formed close networks with their colleagues, which prompted the army to break up the Bausoldaten into smaller units.

<sup>126</sup> The NVA admitted Bausoldaten in eighteen-month cycles and I refer to each cycle as a generation. Thus, the first generation of Bausoldaten began their service in the fall 1964 and completed their service in 1966. The second generation served from 1966 to 1967, and so on.

<sup>127</sup> Eisenfeld, *Kriegsdienstverweigerung*, 75–81.

<sup>128</sup> Leipzig's church archives contain several such applications from former Bausoldaten. For the text of an applicant's letter of application to the church and biography, both dated 19 May 1982, see SLWA: 9.3.1 Sozialdiakonische Jugendarbeit, 1978–1987.

<sup>129</sup> Ekkehard Vollbach, interview by author, Leipzig, Germany, 18 October 2001.

Though marginalized by the state, former Bausoldaten established networks with fellow travelers. Ironically, an unavoidable consequence of the Bausoldaten units was that it helped conscientious objectors meet and establish contact with other conscientious objectors from all over the GDR. The report and appeal issued by the Bausoldaten in Garz and Prenzlau in 1966 indicates that members of these units worked together to advance their concerns regarding peace among the general public. However, former Bausoldaten indicated that it was often difficult to maintain frequent or close contact with men with whom they had served in a particular unit after their service ended because most returned to their hometowns, often in different parts of the country.<sup>130</sup> Despite this obstacle, the Bausoldat experience remained an important part of their identity. For most, the decision to serve as a Bausoldat represented a life-commitment to peace, a decision not to be taken lightly since many gave up education or career opportunities by serving as Bausoldaten.

Upon completing their service in 1966, some members of the first generation of Bausoldaten organized a working group whose goal would be to establish a permanent peace institute that would help as many former Bausoldaten as possible continue their service for peace. This peace institute would provide former Bausoldaten with peace-related materials and forge contacts with conscientious objectors in other countries. It would also establish contact with the Evangelical Church's youth ministries and groups such as Aktion Sühnezeichen, as well as provide moral support and social assistance to Bausoldaten after completion of their service. The working group failed to establish a permanent peace institute, but it succeeded in establishing a Department for Peace Questions as a part of the newly formed Kirchenbund in 1970.<sup>131</sup> By organizing an annual gathering of former Bausoldaten for a peace seminar, the first generation of Bausoldaten accomplished many of the tasks that they had hoped to achieve with the peace institute. All former Bausoldaten were invited to attend this gathering, held first in East Berlin between 1966 and 1968. From 1969 until the final gathering in 1985, these gatherings took place in Leipzig each February or March. The Evangelical Church permitted the events to be held in church buildings, and prominent pastors and theologians, many of whom were affiliated with the church's Department for Peace Questions, presented the lectures that examined Christian perspectives to war and peace. The peace seminar's themes included: "The Peace Ethic of the Catholic Church" (1967), "Just and Unjust

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<sup>130</sup> Bächer, interview.

<sup>131</sup> Ehring and Dallwitz, *Schwerter zu Pflugsharen*, 135.

War" (1976), and "What makes us secure?" (1982).<sup>132</sup> Former Bausoldaten often presented lectures at these gatherings. The annual gathering and peace seminar facilitated the former Bausoldaten's continued commitment to peace in their daily lives. At these gatherings, former Bausoldaten established contact with colleagues in their own town or city, and many often formed local groups that met informally throughout the year.<sup>133</sup>

The local and regional efforts of former Bausoldaten continued the use of peace seminars. A former Bausoldat, Hansjörg Weigel, organized the first Königswalde peace seminar in May 1973. Twenty-five former Bausoldaten attended this event. By 1979 attendance had increased so that the weekend seminar held every May and October had to be moved from a small church community room to the village church itself.<sup>134</sup> In May 1981 about 280 people attended this peace seminar, and in October 1981 attendance reached 400.<sup>135</sup> A photograph taken of the October 1981 peace seminar published in the church weekly *Der Sonntag* portrays people crowded around four long tables set up in the church sanctuary listening to a speaker standing at a small podium a few steps in front of the altar.<sup>136</sup> Activities at the peace seminar included lectures, group discussion, a cultural evening, an ecumenical Holy Communion Service, and exhibitions.<sup>137</sup> At both of the 1981 peace seminars the participants divided into fifteen discussion groups to discuss specific questions related to that year's lecture themes.<sup>138</sup> According to former Bausoldat Georg Meusel, the high attendance made it necessary to establish a full-time planning circle composed of about fifteen laymen, local pastors, and in some years the local church superintendent. This planning circle met once a month and funding for the peace seminar came from donations.<sup>139</sup> In the

<sup>132</sup> Helmut Wolff, a first generation Bausoldaten, compiled a list of dates, speakers and lecture titles presented at these peace seminars that examined different aspects of peace. "Friedens-Seminare ehemaliger Bausoldaten," document from the personal collection of Helmut Wolff [hereafter PA-HW].

<sup>133</sup> Wolff, interview; Nitzsche, interview; Bächer, interview.

<sup>134</sup> Georg Meusel, "Königswalde und die Arbeit christlicher Friedensseminare," *Spuren*, 61–63, ABL; Georg Meusel, "10 Jahre Friedensseminar Königswalde," *Der Sonntag*, 19 June 1983, 1, ABL.

<sup>135</sup> Meusel, "Friedensgebet und Friedensseminar in Königswalde," 3 and G. Meusel, "Friedensseminare in unserer Landeskirche," 3, both in ABL.

<sup>136</sup> Meusel, "Friedensseminare in unserer Landeskirche," 3.

<sup>137</sup> Meusel, "Königswalde," 64.

<sup>138</sup> Meusel, "Friedensgebet und Friedensseminar in Königswalde," 3 and Meusel, "Friedensseminare in unserer Landeskirche," 3.

<sup>139</sup> Meusel, "Königswalde," 64–65.

following years former Bausoldaten in Meißen, Karl-Marx-Stadt, Naumburg, Saalfeld, Leuna, Zittau, Frankenhausen, Mecklenburg, and Leipzig also organized regular peace seminars.<sup>140</sup> Attendance at the Meißen peace seminar, held every fall and spring since 1975, increased from 150 in 1981 to 250 people in April 1982, in contrast to the sixty people who attended the peace seminar in Karl-Marx-Stadt that same month in 1982.<sup>141</sup>

Evidence from these accounts indicates that the Königswalde peace seminar continued the work of the GDR-wide Bausoldaten peace seminar at the local level, and it implemented many of the goals that had been set by the 1966 working group in its efforts to establish a permanent peace institute. Weigel, its organizer, embodied the ideal “Bausoldat for life” by pursuing a commitment to peace after completing his unarmed military service.<sup>142</sup> Many of the themes explored at the Königswalde peace seminar are identical to those that had been discussed at the annual Bausoldaten peace seminar.<sup>143</sup> The accounts in *Der Sonntag* point to a correlation between the two events. They indicate that many of the theologians and pastors who lectured at the annual Bausoldaten gathering and peace seminar, such as Joachim Garstecki, Heino Falcke, and Rudolph Albrecht, were regular speakers at Königswalde and the other regional peace seminars. In the relatively small world of East German conscientious objectors, these church leaders became prominent speakers. As theologians, Garstecki and Falcke served on many of the EKD/Kirchenbund’s committees that focused on peace questions and promoted a Christian interpretation of peace. Albrecht had served in one of the first cohorts of Bausoldaten. In the next three decades, he actively supported Bausoldat initiatives as a member of the clergy, particularly within the Landeskirche Saxony. For example, Rudolph Albrecht lectured on nonviolence at the February 1981 Bausoldaten peace seminar in Leipzig and spoke on the same subject at the Meißen seminar later that October.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>140</sup> Meusel indicates that Mecklenburg had a “mobile peace seminar” but does not explain how this worked. Meusel, “Königswalde,” 62. Meusel does not refer to Leipzig’s peace seminar—to be discussed in more detail later in this study—but it was inspired by the success of these earlier peace seminars. Bächer, interview.

<sup>141</sup> Meusel, “Friedensseminare in unserer Landeskirche,” 1, and Bettina Nicolaus, “Landesbischof visitierte Friedensseminar” *Der Sonntag*, 9 May 1982, 3, both in ABL.

<sup>142</sup> Meusel, “10 Jahre Friedensseminar Königswalde,” 1 and Meusel, “Königswalde,” 63.

<sup>143</sup> Meusel, “Königswalde,” 63.

<sup>144</sup> “Friedens-Seminare ehemaliger Bausoldaten,” PA-HW. Also see Meusel, “Friedensseminar in unserer Landeskirche,” 1.

The local peace seminars brought the issue of peace into the public realm to a much greater extent than any of the earlier efforts of the former Bausoldaten. Although only former Bausoldaten attended the annual gathering and peace seminar, the regional peace seminars included men and women of all ages, including young children and senior citizens.<sup>145</sup> The regional peace seminars created a forum where peace issues could be discussed at the local level, and East Germans interested in the issue of peace traveled from all over the GDR to attend these events. According to Meusel, the Königswalde community usually provided accommodation for about one hundred people who had traveled from elsewhere in the GDR and the same had to be done in Meißen.<sup>146</sup>

Though the party-state had initiated the Bausoldat option, the regional and local activities of former Bausoldaten had been unanticipated consequences. Written accounts of peace seminars and anecdotal evidence from interviews of former Bausoldaten indicates that these church-sponsored events played an important role in building networks among Bausoldaten who had served at different times and in different units. Aktion Sühnezeichen and the Bausoldaten shared a context in that their activities could not be publicized or organized outside of the Evangelical Church's structures. Therefore, theologians and clergy, in particular local clergy, became important and often guiding component of each expression of peace activism.

## Summary

In 1978 Václav Benda, a Czech Catholic activist and founder of Charter 77, formulated a strategy for rejuvenating civil society in Eastern Europe through the construction of parallel structures or a "parallel *polis*."<sup>147</sup> In the following year, Benda wrote an essay suggesting that developments in the religious sphere could facilitate the construction of a "parallel *polis*": "...Of course, there is no such thing as a healthy *polis* or dynamic political life in Eastern Europe...[It is] the mission of Catholics and Christians in general to form this new type of *polis*. For I am convinced that we are all

<sup>145</sup> Meusel, "Königswalde," 64. Several issues of *Der Sonntag* published photographs from various peace seminars in 1981 and 1982 that illustrate the variety of sexes and ages. See Meusel, "Friedensgebet und Friedensseminar in Königswalde," 3 and Meusel, "Friedensseminare in unserer Landeskirche," 1.

<sup>146</sup> Meusel, "Königswalde," 64; Nicolaus, "Landesbischof visitierte Friedensseminar," 3.

<sup>147</sup> Benda, "Parallel Polis."



now faced with the same task: to fill the void which is prompting people to search for a new theology, a more meaningful faith, a new philosophy, and new science, or a new *polis*. In Eastern Europe, though, this task has a political aspect...and even a certain urgency, because, in fact, any demonstration of faith is actually considered to be political activity.”<sup>148</sup> Without making any reference to the secret church, Benda identified the potential role that Christians could play in developing parallel structures. The secret church, Aktion Sühnezeichen and the Bausoldaten had already successfully constructed such spheres of independent activity that engaged society by the time Benda wrote this essay and Václav Havel and György Konrád had begun discussing the notions of “Living in Truth” and “Antipolitics” as methods for rejuvenating civil society.<sup>149</sup> Regardless of their size, Benda recognized that the Communist authorities would view these structures as political activity because they challenged state power and the party-state’s exercise of it.

State power, however, remained extensive and the scope for independent activity in each free space was limited. While making freedom of worship possible, the secret church’s freedom was confined to the underground. To act publicly, openly or to directly challenge the state in any manner could have negative legal consequences for those involved in the secret church. The secret church, therefore, confined its work to the underground private apartments and it did not pursue (until the 1980s) activities that openly challenged the state’s power. The protection made available to Aktion Sühnezeichen was also accompanied by limits. As Friedrich Magirius, one of its leaders, recognized, an important part of Aktion Sühnezeichen’s significance was that it allowed young people a space where they could think and act freely of state control. Yet, this freedom remained confined to the space of the summer camps, annual gatherings, and regional groups. Also, as with the secret church, its actions and discussions did not address topics that were directly critical of state power. For instance, though many Bausoldaten envisioned a form of service along the lines of Aktion Sühnezeichen that could be separate from the military, Aktion Sühnezeichen was much more careful about openly promoting service in the Bausoldat units. Its leaders such as Friedrich

<sup>148</sup> Václav Benda, “Catholicism and Politics: The Origins of the Present Situation and How It May Develop,” *Religion in Communist Lands* 9, nos 1–2 (1981): 60–61.

<sup>149</sup> See Havel, “The Power of the Powerless” and Konrád, *Antipolitics*. For a thorough analysis of these concepts, see Falk, *Dilemmas of Dissidence*. See also Tucker, *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence* and Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics*.

Magirius certainly hoped that its summer camp participants would become informed of peace issues and then select unarmed military service. However, they were also aware that it was a politically sensitive topic that if openly discussed might draw undesired attention from the state.

The limitations on the Bausoldaten came from the state, rather than from the Evangelical Church. The Evangelical Church supported their conscientious objection, but ironically it was the state that brought these otherwise isolated pacifists together by putting them in common military units. During their military service, the free space of the conscientious objectors became located within an instrument of state power: the NVA. In their military units, many Bausoldaten began to discuss peace, the GDR's military policies and even hold bible studies. Because their free space was not secretly located in the underground or within the Evangelical Church, the Bausoldaten were more openly vocal in their opposition to the state's military policies. Compared to the Slovak secret church and Aktion Sühnezeichen, the Bausoldaten offered the strongest challenge to state power by opposing the state's military power through their words and actions. East Germans opting for unarmed service in the Bausoldat units, like Krčméry and Jukl in the Slovak secret church, paid a much higher price than those active in Aktion Sühnezeichen. Despite its legality, the Bausoldaten were not viewed favorably by the state. Their freedom to reject the state's preference for armed military service came at a personal price; it placed black marks on their future educational and career opportunities outside of the church. Many former Bausoldaten continued their commitment to promoting peace at the local level and maintained contact with other Bausoldaten and former Bausoldaten throughout the GDR. Local groups, often of no more than three to four former Bausoldaten, met informally in private apartments. The first generation of Bausoldaten began a process of gradually overcoming the limited opportunities these small groups had by transferring their free space to the space of the Evangelical Church, beginning with the annual peace seminar in 1966. The scope of their activities, however, initially remained confined to former Bausoldaten.

These examples from the Slovak and East German cases suggest that factors other than church-state relations and levels of secularization account for the presence of activism in the religious sphere. The growth of the secret church represented one way that Slovak Catholics had resisted secularization. The case of East Germany, however, indicates that the consequences of the state's secularization policies are more complex. Expressions of independent activity in the religious sphere thrived, despite lower measures of religiosity. The Evangelical Church enjoyed a higher level of autonomy and

though many pastors such as Pastor Brüsewitz were concerned about the negative impact of the state's policies on the spiritual development of young East Germans, neither the Bausoldaten or Aktion Sühnezeichen made the theme of spiritual development a priority in the way that the Slovak secret church did. Aktion Sühnezeichen and the Bausoldaten were not trying to make stronger Christians. That mission remained the task of the institutional church. Rather, religious belief was a vehicle for promoting peace for those involved in Aktion Sühnezeichen and the Bausoldaten.

The success of Slovak Catholics and East German Protestants in constructing a free space was primarily a consequence of their being the predominant religious population in each country, rather than a result of specifically Catholic or Protestant qualities. A Lutheran secret church had also developed in Slovakia as early as the 1950s, but it was never as extensive as the Catholic secret church. Only 6.2 percent of the Slovak population declared that they were Lutheran in the 1991 census, and the smaller scale of this secret church reflects that number.<sup>150</sup> The activities of the Lutheran secret church focused purely on the spiritual renewal of its members through bible studies and youth education conducted secretly in private apartments. The Communist regime had also repressed the Lutheran Church in Slovakia in the 1950s. On October 14, 1949, the Czechoslovak National Assembly passed a law establishing state control over the largest Lutheran body, the Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Augsburg Confession (SECAV). The independent association of pastors in SECAV was disbanded and replaced by the Coalition of Slovak Evangelical Pastors in 1950. This new body was an association of Lutheran clergy and administrators approved by the regime with the goal of assuring the loyalty of clergy in the building of socialism.<sup>151</sup> Lutheran pastors who refused to compromise with the regime, such as Pavel Uhorskai, lost their licenses to be pastors and served considerable prison sentences in the 1950s.<sup>152</sup> Upon his release, the authorities refused to grant Uhorskai a pastoral license and he spent many years working as a laborer. The secret church, however, provided a venue where Uhorskai, other former pastors and dedicated laypeople could minister and worship.<sup>153</sup> According to Viola Fronková, an economist for the state

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<sup>150</sup> Votruba, "The Geography of Slovakia's Religions."

<sup>151</sup> Uhorskai, *Uncompromising Faith*, 37.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>153</sup> Uhorskai's involvement in the secret church is described in a letter to the reader by Pastor Ján Bohdan Hrobon at the end of Uhorskai's account. Hrobon also lists several other Lutheran theologians active in the secret church: Štefan Dlhán, Otto Vizner, Jozef Juráš, Dr. Julius Cibulka, Pavel Hronec, Milan Kostra, and Ján Strbka. *Ibid.*, 152.

who became a Christian and an active secret church member after a visit to Oxford in 1969, foreign missionaries gave great support to the Lutheran secret church and would often visit the country and attend bible studies. Fronková recounted how forty to fifty people would meet in a living room, "People would come in small groups of two or three to such a meeting within a span of an hour or two."<sup>154</sup> The Lutheran secret church fostered many ties with Lutherans in the West and contact did exist between the leaders of the Lutheran and Catholic secret church. For example, Fronková occasionally attended bible studies with the Catholic activist František Mikloško. However, they existed as separate structures and there were almost no ties between the broader memberships of the two groups.<sup>155</sup>

In the GDR, participation in Aktion Sühnezeichen and service in the unarmed construction units was not limited to Protestant Lutherans, though they made up the higher percentages (again reflecting their percentage of the population). Ecumenism was a central component of Aktion Sühnezeichen's mission. Aktion Sühnezeichen not only sought to foster closer ties between Catholics and Protestants, but also with Jews. Its statutes called for the inclusion of a Catholic representative in its governing body. The Catholic Church, though a minority church in the GDR, benefited from the terms of the March 1978 summit. Catholics and believers from other denominations had equal access to service in the Bausoldaten units and many selected this option.

The SED in the GDR was certainly more tolerant of its Protestants in the immediate postwar period than the party leadership was of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia, but this discussion of the secret church, Aktion Sühnezeichen and the Bausoldaten suggests that there might be other factors to explain why these expressions of independent activity were able to expand. Throughout the Soviet bloc, the state denied citizens full civil and political rights in practice, but it provided social rights, such as employment, social welfare, and education.<sup>156</sup> Milan Šimečka, a dissident living in Bratislava, examined how this partial fulfillment of rights encouraged the emergence of what he labels the "*adaptation* factor," which occurred during

<sup>154</sup> Viola Fronková, "We Don't Have to Hide the Car (Anymore)" *Wherever* (spring 1991): 5–6.

<sup>155</sup> Viola Fronková, interview by author, Bratislava, Slovakia, 13 July 1996. Mikloško confirmed that this contact existed. František Mikloško, interview by author, Bratislava, Slovakia, 16 July 1996.

<sup>156</sup> Slovak sociologist Iveta Radičová argues that this combination of both civil and social rights is necessary for civil society's full development. Radičová, "The Social Costs of Economic Transformation," 83.

normalization in Czechoslovakia in the 1970s and 1980s. Šimečka, attempting to account for the willingness of citizens to accept constraints in life in a political system that had lost much of its legitimacy after the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968, writes: "The state does not require the entire person, just the part that projects above the surface of public life; and that if this part accepts the sole truth [that there is only one party, that everything belongs to the state, which is also the sole employer, etc.] then the individual may do what he or she likes in the private sphere."<sup>157</sup> Šimečka's observations about the passivity of Czecho-Slovaks after 1968 might be helpful for understanding state's responses to the religious activism of Slovaks and East Germans before 1968. Šimečka recognized that some activities might be tolerated by the state because they did not threaten it openly or publicly. This certainly fits the activities of the secret church (which remained largely in the home and avoided confrontation with the state) and Aktion Sühnezeichen (which remained in the space of the church and also avoided politically sensitive issues). In many ways, the secret church and Aktion Sühnezeichen represented safety-valves for believers not willing to conform to the state's policies; each functioned as an arena where participants could act independently without having to openly express criticism of the state. The formation of the Bausoldaten units certainly reflects a weakness of state power *vis-à-vis* the Evangelical Church. The Bausoldaten, in contrast to the secret church and Aktion Sühnezeichen, represented a direct challenge to state power. Yet, the Bausoldaten decree channeled opponents of the military into a military unit. Many Bausoldaten actively promoted peace after their military service, but many of their activities remained either in the confines of private apartments or the space of the Evangelical Church.

State power in Slovakia and the GDR was extensive after 1949, and the movements that emerged in the free spaces differed in their goals, activities, location, and their legal status. However, they shared a set of components that made their successful development possible. While promoting values not in line with state policy, they did not directly challenge the political dominance of the party-state. Religious belief provided an important social and cultural bond that united members of the secret church, Aktion Sühnezeichen's summer camp participants and the Bausoldaten. Each of these expressions of independent activity grew significantly, but at the same time the scale of their activities remained relatively small and confined to isolated spaces within Slovak and East German society.

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<sup>157</sup> Šimečka, "Adaptation," 139–140.



## CHAPTER 3

# Independent Publishing and Communication Networks

In a letter to the editors of *Katolické noviny*—the state approved and supported news periodical of the Catholic Church—in the late 1970s, Cardinal Tomášek criticized the weekly's preoccupation with reports on *Pacem in Terris*. Making a subtle critique of *Pacem in Terris*, he argued that this periodical neglected the real spiritual needs of Czechoslovakia's believers. Cardinal Tomášek drew further attention to the poor quality of religious material available for Czechoslovakia's believers by pointing out that of the 865 periodicals published in Czechoslovakia, *Katolické noviny* (only three pages in length) was the only religious periodical for the general public.<sup>1</sup> State restrictions on the Catholic Church's publications had begun in 1945 when the provisional government nationalized its publishing houses.<sup>2</sup> The quality of *Katolické noviny*'s content had improved during the Prague Spring in 1968, but Husák's government had reintroduced restrictions during normalization that resulted in the frustration Cardinal Tomášek expressed in this letter.<sup>3</sup> In a February 16, 1981 letter, Tomášek again criticized *Katolické noviny*'s focus on *Pacem in Terris*, disarmament and international relations, rather than Papal speeches and news about the Catholic Church in the world. Tomášek closed the letter with frustration that the editors did not publish many of his contributions: "As regards my contributions to *Katolické noviny*, may I remind you that according to my copies of letters I have written to you, on 18 October 1980 I sent you five contributions, none of which was published, on 12 January 1981 I sent you six con-

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<sup>1</sup> Tomášek in this letter cited *Lidova demokracie* (28 November 1976) for the number of periodicals published in Czechoslovakia. Letter from Tomášek to editors of *Katolické noviny*, undated, translated by Keston College, KI: CZ ROM 8/2 Tomášek, František.

<sup>2</sup> Ramet, *Cross and Commissar*, 76.

<sup>3</sup> Reban, "Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia," 150–151.

tributions, only two of which were published, and on 3 February 1981 I sent you five contributions, none of which was published.”<sup>4</sup> During the summer of 1981, *Katolícké noviny* published a letter that Cardinal Tomášek had sent to Rome following the assassination attempt against Pope John Paul II. The editors of the Czech religious samizdat periodical *Informace o církvi* published excerpts of the original version of Tomášek’s letter and underlined the portions of text omitted by *Katolícké noviny* to demonstrate the extent to which the editors had censored this letter:

Everywhere you go, preach respect for human dignity and the observance of all basic human rights. It is none other than our present Pope, John Paul II who emphasizes this again and again in all his speeches and on all his journeys. At the same time he also points out that it is above all respect for man’s right to freedom of religion which guarantees the observance of human rights in general. Yes, it is just as the slogan on one of the banners carried by young people in a procession in Rome declared: “O CRISTO, O MORTE!”—“Either Christ, or death!” We may choose either Christ, life and salvation, the preservation of human dignity, marriage, the family, the nation and the entire human race, or corruption and death...  
...Only Christ can say to us: “I have come that men may have life, and may have it in all its fullness.” “I am the way; the truth and the life.”<sup>5</sup>

In addition to deleting references to human rights, the editors also censored all references to the Church’s fundamental message of salvation through Christ Jesus. The difficulties that Cardinal Tomášek encountered conveying uncensored news and information in this example from Czechoslovakia are emblematic of the challenges that citizens (believers and non-believers) faced throughout the Soviet bloc when trying to publish content not in-line with or critical of the state’s position.

In both Czechoslovakia and the GDR, the state imposed limits on the freedom of publishers and in both countries, grassroots publishing challenged these limits. In the Slovak case, believers overcame this obstacle by developing an extensive samizdat network. Samizdat refers to newspapers, articles, essays, books, or any other published material reproduced unofficially (and usually illegally) with mimeograph machines, computers, typed carbon paper, or even by hand. It was usually distributed through personal networks and informal contacts. In his analysis of samizdat throughout East Central Europe, Skilling argues that building independ-

<sup>4</sup> This translation, citing the article in *Informace o církvi*, no. 4 (1981): 24–25, was made by Keston College, see KI: CZ ROM 8/2 Tomášek, František.

<sup>5</sup> These excerpts appeared in *Informace o církvi*, no. 7 (1981): 17. This translation also made by Keston College, see KI: CZ ROM 8/2 Tomasek, František.



ent networks of communication became an effective means to inform and mobilize citizens in East-Central Europe.<sup>6</sup> Samizdat became a vehicle for expressing independent thought throughout the Soviet bloc, including the GDR. However, the position of the Evangelical Church in the GDR permitted East German activists the opportunity to publish and distribute uncensored news within certain limits under the protective umbrella of the church. Unlike Samizdat, which throughout the Soviet bloc was generally illegal to publish and distribute, materials published under church-sponsorship in the GDR enjoyed legal status. Both types of publications enjoyed the status of being independent from direct state power; yet this analysis of church-sponsored publications in the GDR reveals one way in which the party-state's oversight had been shifted to the Evangelical Church. In other words, the legal benefits of church-sponsored publications need to be considered in conjunction with the consequences on the resulting content in the publications. Samizdat in Slovakia, while illegal, granted its publishers greater freedom of expression; whereas church-sponsored publications in the GDR were subject to internal or self-censorship in order to maintain their legal status.

### The Secret Church's Samizdat Network

Between 1948 and 1989 an increasing number of Slovak Catholics wrote, printed and distributed books and other materials about theology, philosophy, catechism, church history, and collections of Papal encyclicals for Slovakia's Catholics in samizdat form. In the 1980s, Peter Murdza, a secret priest in Slovakia, helped edit, print, and coordinate the distribution of these books from his home in Bratislava. According to Murdza, priests, nuns and laypeople often using pseudonyms wrote these books to supplement religious materials smuggled into Slovakia from abroad.<sup>7</sup> Several of the authors had belonged to the Rodina in the later 1940s. Among the most prolific samizdat authors, Bishop Korec wrote over fifty samizdat books prior to 1989 and sixty-eight volumes called the *Library of Faith*.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Skilling, *Samizdat*, 19–40.

<sup>7</sup> Murdza indicates that some books and materials were published outside of Czechoslovakia and then distributed by the secret church. Peter Murdza, text of lecture, 19 April 1996, CDM.

<sup>8</sup> Lesňák briefly describes the format of a total of 452 Slovak samizdat books in his catalog. Lesňák, *Listy z podzemia*, 218–257.

Although the earliest samizdat periodicals had begun even before the Communist took power, the few examples of religious samizdat periodicals published between 1947 and 1982 had a considerably smaller publication size than the periodicals published by the secret church after 1982. *Vzlet*, the earliest-known Slovak religious samizdat periodical, published about 100 copies of each of its nine issues between 1947 and 1949 for gymnasium students in Levoča. Rudolf Lesňák, one of the editors during its first year, writes: "It originated as a forum of literary activity among the gymnasium students and also as an expression of their spiritual engagement and defense towards the atheistic efforts of the gymnasium's administration."<sup>9</sup> *Emanuel*, a religious periodical published 1970–1971 in response to the first stages of normalization, and *Orientácia* (1973–1985) represent the only other known efforts to publish religious samizdat periodicals in Slovakia prior to the 1980s. Like *Vzlet*, neither established a larger readership far beyond its own circle. *Orientácia*, which consistently published an impressive ten to fifteen issues a year until 1983, only printed twenty copies of each issue.

In the 1980s Slovak religious samizdat publishing boomed, and Slovak Catholics published over twenty different samizdat periodicals during the decade, each targeting the different needs and interests of the secret church's members. Although the total readership of this samizdat is unknown, publishing estimates indicate its considerable size. Between 1982 and 1989, the editors of *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* published four issues a year and its print runs increased from 500 in its first year to 1,000 by 1989. *Rodinné spoločenstvo*, published by the Movement of the Christian Family with five issues a year between 1985 and 1989, increased its initial print run of each issue from 600 to 1,300 by 1989. With two issues a year between 1985 and 1989, *Myšlienky z večeradla*, a periodical for priests interested in honoring the Virgin Mary, consistently printed 1,200 copies of each issue. The youth periodical *ZrNO (Zrelosť, Nádej, Orientácia)*, founded in 1989, published an impressive 3,000 copies of its final issue that year. The editors of *Svetlo*, one of the earliest samizdat periodicals for youth, produced only 50 copies of its first issue in 1986, but increased production by the time of its final issue in 1989 to 2,000 copies. *Priloha mladých (NaS)*, another youth periodical, though only yielding three issues in 1988, printed and circulated 900 copies of each issue. Many of the remaining Slovak samizdat periodicals generally printed between 200–

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<sup>9</sup> Lesňák notes that other similar types of samizdat undoubtedly existed during this time, but there is little record of them. *Ibid.*, 181.

500 copies of each issue: *Bratislavské listy* (1988–1989; five issues); *Hlas Slovenska* (1988–1989; 8 issues); *Una Sancta Catholica* (1983–1985; 6 issues); *Katolícky mesačník* (1988–1989; 18 issues); and *Radost' a nádej* (1987–1989; 10 issues). As evidence of the secret church's presence outside of Bratislava, Ivan Polanský, one of the most productive publishers of religious samizdat, organized the publication of *Serafínsky svet* (1982–1989, 22 issues), *Pokoj a dobro* (1983 and 1985; 5 issues), *Výber* (1984–1987, 26 issues) and *Historický zápisník* (1986–1987, 3 issues) from his hometown of Nove Dubnice in central Slovakia.<sup>10</sup>

Altogether, Slovak Catholics founded fifteen different religious samizdat periodicals beginning in 1985, reflecting the relative strength of independent religious activity in Slovakia, in contrast to Slovakia's political opposition, which founded three of its four total samizdat periodicals after 1985.<sup>11</sup> Editors of both religious and political samizdat in Slovakia attribute this increase after 1985 to a variety of factors, including the weakening of the Communist regime, particularly after the reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union; the availability of better technology, such as mimeograph machines; and an increase in the religious and political awareness of the population.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, several Czech religious periodicals were widely distributed and read in Slovakia, including *Informace o církvi*, *Velehrad*, *Sursum*, *Křesťanské Obzory*, *Spoločenstvi* and *Teologické texty*. Each of these Czech periodicals frequently published information about Catholic events in Slovakia, such as pilgrimages and persecution of Slovak Catholics. They also frequently republished letters to the state and media written by Slovak members of the secret church, as well as articles that had first appeared in Slovak samizdat.

The technical process of samizdat publishing certainly varied over time, and from periodical to periodical. A closer look at the production process of one of the most substantial samizdat periodicals in Slovakia,

<sup>10</sup> Publishing information calculated based on information taken from appendix in Šimulčík, *Svetlo z podzemia*, 261–274 and Lesňák, *Listy z podzemia*.

<sup>11</sup> *Altamira* (1985–1987); *K* (1986–1987); *Fragment* (1987). In 1988, the editors of *K* and *Fragment* combined their efforts to publish *Fragment K* (1988–1991). The other civil-political samizdat, *Kontakt*, was published between 1980–1983. Kusá et al, *Život v slove a život slovom*, 125.

<sup>12</sup> Ján Čarnogurský interview by author, Bratislava, Slovakia, 16 July 1996; Mikloško, interview; Martin Šimečka, interview by author, Bratislava, Slovakia, 25 June 1996; Miroslav Kusý, interview by author, Bratislava, Slovakia, 20 June 1996; Ján Langoš, interview by author, Bratislava, Slovakia, 9 July 1996.

*Náboženstvo a súčasnosť*, reveals how its editors overcame the state's restrictions on unofficial publishing and successfully produced and distributed this periodical. For this larger publication, several different groups of people performed different tasks, such as editing, printing, collecting paper and ink, and distribution. For security reasons, personal contact between the different groups was kept to a minimum. First, an editorial board of approximately five people (including Ján Čarnogurský, Vladimír Jukl, František Mikloško, and Peter Murdza) wrote and compiled the contributions into a master copy of a particular issue, generally between twenty and thirty pages in length. The editors then delivered the master copy to a smaller group of people who actually handled the technical job of setting and printing the copies. In 1986, a member of the secret church with a degree in civil engineering named Juraj Kohutiar took on this task of printing that year's four issues of *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť*. Kohutiar explained that upon receiving the master copy from the editorial board, he went to his cottage about forty kilometers from Bratislava where he kept an illegal printing machine. Although Kohutiar never knew the exact source of paper and ink necessary to publish the 800–1,000 copies, he reported that it was acquired through underground means from contacts the secret church had with people who had access to such materials in their workplace. Kohutiar, with some additional help, usually worked from 4:00 p.m. to about 2:00–3:00 a.m. printing and stapling the copies. Kohutiar did not know the identities of the people responsible for distributing the samizdat, but he knew that the copies were taken to Bratislava, Žilina, Banská Bystrica, Košice, and other Slovak cities. Kohutiar recalled that the secret church's "underground structures were able to distribute these journals very quickly and efficiently" through its different levels. In 1987, the job of printing *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* rotated to someone else for security reasons.<sup>13</sup>

The secret church's structure facilitated the distribution of this body of samizdat literature. As indicated earlier, regular meetings of the leadership of the secret church were held both in Bratislava and in different regions of Slovakia. One of the functions of these meetings of secret church was the distribution of samizdat books and periodicals to the different community leaders.<sup>14</sup> Several factors increased the dissemination of samizdat content. In addition to books and periodicals, members of the secret church also wrote and distributed essays, reports, petitions, letters, an-

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<sup>13</sup> Kohutiar, interview.

<sup>14</sup> Šimulčík, lecture, 19 April 1996.

nouncements, and other texts in loose-leaf samizdat form. In many cases, excerpts from samizdat books, or particular samizdat periodicals were copied and distributed in this simpler format that is not reflected in any of these publishing estimates.<sup>15</sup> Also, Western news medium, such as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Voice of America and Vatican Radio, sometimes acquired samizdat periodicals and then broadcast information from their contents into Czechoslovakia, whereby those without access to samizdat could learn of their contents.<sup>16</sup>

Religious samizdat periodicals became one of the most vibrant features of the secret church in Slovakia. A short article in the January 1985 issue of *Rodinné spoločenstvo* titled "Live everyday in the presence of God," provided readers with a weekly schedule of scripture readings and short prayers for every week of the church year.<sup>17</sup> Hymns and religious poetry could also frequently be found in samizdat.<sup>18</sup> As a source for educational material for Slovakia's Catholic youth, the samizdat contained a wide variety of resources. By 1988 and 1989, catechism lessons were a regular section in *Rodinné spoločenstvo*.<sup>19</sup> Another periodical published lesson plans for children between the ages of fourteen and eighteen.<sup>20</sup> One issue of *Svetlo* informed young people about the Catholic Church's order communities with an essay describing what the order communities were and how someone joined them. It then described each order, how it was founded and its history in Slovakia.<sup>21</sup> Other periodicals, such as *ZrNO* provided exercises and short dialogues to help young people respond responsibly to things like rock music in their daily lives.<sup>22</sup> Some samizdat periodicals also contained games, tongue twisters, personality quizzes, and other activities for children.<sup>23</sup> *Rodinné spoločenstvo*, in its second year, added an illustrated cartoon series titled "Father František and His Message of Love" that followed the adventures of a medieval monk trav-

<sup>15</sup> Kohutiar, interview.

<sup>16</sup> Mikloško reported that Anton Hlinka with *Voice of America* in Munich frequently passed on information to Vatican Radio. Mikloško, interview.

<sup>17</sup> "Kazdy den zit v pritomnosti Bozej," *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 1 (1985): 16–18.

<sup>18</sup> For hymns see *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 4 (1989): 43–44 and *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 3 (1989): 59. For examples of poetry see *Radosť a nádej* 4 (1988): 104 and *Radosť a nádej* 1 (1989): 161 ff.

<sup>19</sup> See *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 4 (1988) and *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 1–3 (1989).

<sup>20</sup> *ZrNO* 4 (1989): 38–39.

<sup>21</sup> *Svetlo* 14 (1989): 14–21ff.

<sup>22</sup> "Satanizmus ako droga," *ZrNO* 1 (1989): 14i15 and "Dom, ci cesta?" *ZrNO* 1 (1989): 10i11.

<sup>23</sup> *Svetlo* 10 (1988): 23–27, 38–39.

eling across Europe and reminded its young readers of Slovak Catholicism's rich place in European history.<sup>24</sup>

As a news source, religious samizdat made up for the shortcomings of the official press. The editors of *Una Sancta Catholica*, a periodical published specifically for priests, primarily contained unedited correspondence from the Pope and Cardinal Tomášek, as well as information about the Pope, the Vatican, and even the Church in Canada.<sup>25</sup> Other religious samizdat periodicals also republished this church correspondence, as well as other letters between the secret church activists and the state and media representatives. Documents, such as the Pope's 1983 "Charter of the Rights of the Family," could be read in samizdat form.<sup>26</sup> Several samizdat periodicals also published church news about the Catholic Church elsewhere in the world.<sup>27</sup> *Výber* frequently published Radio Free Europe's broadcast schedule of religious programming.<sup>28</sup> Samizdat helped the tradition of religious pilgrimages resurface as an important feature of religious life in Slovakia in the 1980s by publicizing yearly pilgrimage schedules and transcripts of sermons spoken during mass at the pilgrimages. Several samizdat periodicals also published first hand accounts of Catholics who attended a particular pilgrimage (see chapter 4).

Samizdat periodicals also helped prepare readers for encounters with state authorities. In the late 1980s, readers of both *Výber* and *Rodinné spoločenstvo* could find extensive articles about their legal rights as Christians in Czechoslovakia. *Výber*'s nine page article in 1987 presented the legal code for a number of different scenarios and advised the readers on what to do in situations that ranged from arrest to sending letters and making telephone calls within the country and abroad.<sup>29</sup> In 1988, *Rodinné spoločenstvo* began a seven part series titled "A Lawyer Speaks" that provided a similar explanation of a citizen's legal rights. Each week, an anonymous author focused on a specific section of the law code.<sup>30</sup> The editors also invited readers to submit specific questions for the "lawyer" and published the responses in subsequent issues. In one such issue, a

<sup>24</sup> For one strip see *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 4 (1986): unnumbered pages at the end of this issue.

<sup>25</sup> See *Una Sancta Catholica* Advent (1983) and *Una Sancta Catholica Cez Rok* (1984): 8–30.

<sup>26</sup> For this charter, see "Charta prav rodiny," *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 6 (1986): 2–6.

<sup>27</sup> For one such example, see *Výber* 3 (1984): 6.

<sup>28</sup> *Výber* 2 (1984): 70.

<sup>29</sup> "Zakladne pravidla hry," *Výber* 3 (1987): 30–39.

<sup>30</sup> See *Rodinné spoločenstvo*, 1–5 (1988) and *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 1–2 (1989).

reader asked the lawyer to explain the legal code regarding samizdat and public demonstrations.<sup>31</sup>

Slovakia's religious samizdat also documented the secret church's own history by commemorating the important anniversaries of events and people that were an integral part of its history. One of the biggest blows to the Catholic Church after the communist takeover had been the overnight liquidation of the order communities in 1950. On the thirty-fifth anniversary of this event, *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* carried a three-page article recounting the significance of that event.<sup>32</sup> Korec's secret consecration as bishop was also frequently celebrated in samizdat. For the significant birthdays of the founders of the Rodina, such as Krčmery's, samizdat periodicals contained biographical sketches of their lives, generally emphasizing their dedication to their faith in spite of having had to serve lengthy prison sentences for it.<sup>33</sup> These samizdat periodicals therefore always reminded its readers of the brutal persecution the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia had suffered at the hands of the Communists decades earlier, and it constructed a pantheon of its heroes—individuals who had endured persecution and imprisonment to preserve Christianity in Slovakia.

An eight-page essay in a 1982 issue of *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* analyzed the historical tradition of religious figures as symbols of moral opposition against state power. This tradition—identified by the article's anonymous author—included the opposition of Ambrose of Milan against Emperor Theodosian, Pope Gregory VII against Henry IV in the investiture controversy, as well as Saint Stanislaus (Bishop of Kraków) and Thomas Beckett (Archbishop of Canterbury) who died as a result of their opposition to secular rulers. The author pointed out that in the Czech lands, Jan Hus had become a symbol of moral opposition to brute power (at a time when state and church power had converged). Turning to Poland, it discussed how Cardinal Wyszyński had successfully advocated for the rights of believers during the Polish October in 1956. In response to the question of what was different about Slovakia, the author explained that its church hierarchy had been repressed by the party-state. The consequences of this repression were significant: "There is constantly more evidence that when the church stops being a moral opposition, when it loses the ability to be people's conscience for the defense of the weak and

<sup>31</sup> See *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 4 (1989): 39–50.

<sup>32</sup> "K vyrociu likvidácie kláštorov," *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 2 (1985): 4–6.

<sup>33</sup> For the occasion of Korec's sixty-fifth birthday, see "Z exkluzívneho interview," *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 3 (1989): 1314. Also, "Dr. Silvester Krčmery 60-ročný," 19–20.

persecuted” then the people follow the church’s lead in refusing to speak out. The author concludes, “The Polish example shows that this does not have to be the case.”<sup>34</sup>

As the 1980s progressed, more politically oriented content could be found in Slovak religious samizdat. Some articles critically analyzed statements by the Secretariat of the Office for Church Affairs<sup>35</sup> and others began chronicling the absence of complete religious freedom in Czechoslovakia.<sup>36</sup> Pope John Paul II’s sermons and pronouncements that spoke about religious freedom could also be found in samizdat.<sup>37</sup> Reflecting the influence of the new political situation in Gorbachev’s USSR, in 1988 the editors of *Rodinné spoločenstvo* published an essay that examined how the policy of glasnost apparently did not apply to religion in Czechoslovakia.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps indicating the growing strength of political activism in Slovakia at the end of 1989, the less politically oriented samizdat periodical *Radost’ a nádej*’s published Václav Havel’s essay “A Word about Words.”<sup>39</sup>

An extensive network of resources and ideas became available to Slovak Catholics through this samizdat. Religious samizdat served as a tool for the leaders of the secret church to provide spiritual content to its readers. Its content provided educational materials for different audiences, ranging from cartoons and activities for children to more theologically oriented and mature articles for adults. There is no measure of the size of the secret church’s membership by the 1980s, but the extensive production runs of several samizdat periodicals give evidence that there was significant readership within the secret church’s communities. Also, changes in content and the introduction of new periodicals indicate shifts toward more politically oriented issues within the secret church in the mid to late 1980s.

<sup>34</sup> “Cirkev ako morálna opozícia,” *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 4 (1982): 2–9.

<sup>35</sup> “K aktuálnym otázkam náboženskej politiky,” *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 3 (1983): 11–12.

<sup>36</sup> “Uvahy o situácii nasej cirkvi,” *Una Sancta Catholica* Turice (1984): 1i8; and Andrej Skalický, “Konkretna Situácia cirkvi v Československu,” *Radost’ a nádej* 4 (1989): 7–17.

<sup>37</sup> See for example, “O náboženskej slobode,” *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 1 (1989): 7i8.

<sup>38</sup> “Glasno—ale nie o Bohu,” *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 2 (1988): 33–35.

<sup>39</sup> Václav Havel, “Slovo o Slove,” *Radost’ a nádej* 4 (1989): 117–128.



## Church Publications in the GDR

The Evangelical Church's greater level of institutional autonomy in the GDR presented religious activists with a broader range of publishing opportunities than Catholics enjoyed in Slovakia. East German readers enjoyed quality publications that were published and marketed to the public by approved church publishing houses and less formally published materials that were published by the church or church-sponsored groups that were intended for internal distribution. The Evangelical Church operated two publishing houses licensed by the Ministry of Culture to publish materials related to the tasks of the church. These included bibles, theological books for pastors and students, literature for congregations, poetry, art, church music and calendars. Church publishing houses could not publish subjects such as religious philosophy, or social and political statements. Before a finished work could be published, the Ministry of Culture had to issue a printing license for it, which depended on the content and the availability of materials in a given year's economic plan. Despite these constraints, the larger of the two church publishing houses released about 230 titles a year by the late 1970s and it had published about three million copies of the Evangelical Church's hymnal since its founding in 1946. The church's publications that made it to press could be sold either at one of about fifty Protestant bookshops in the GDR or at bookstalls run by local congregations and located within church buildings. An estimated 43,000 bibles and 54,000 new testaments were sold annually in the 1970s.<sup>40</sup> The state license regulating the publication of church journals in the GDR did not require pre-censorship, but the content could not contain anything violating the GDR's laws or constitution.<sup>41</sup> While the content of official, publicly available church publications was still subject to state control, the Evangelical Church had greater freedom to publish than the official Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia.

The Evangelical Church's autonomy also allowed church-sponsored organizations and groups a great degree of freedom and support to publish materials intended for internal distribution within the church. These inter-

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<sup>40</sup> Lutz Borgmann, an East German publisher, provided this insight into East German church publishing in a lecture at an international publishing seminar in Great Britain in 1977. Lutz Borgmann, "Christian Publishing in a Socialist Country," presented at the International Publisher's Seminar, Egham, Surrey, September 1977, 2-4, KI: GD 12/10 official religious publications.

<sup>41</sup> Arvan Gordon, "Recent Censorship of Church Journals in the GDR—How and Why?" *KNS*, no. 314, 1 December 1988, 21.

nally distributed publications were exempt from direct state oversight.<sup>42</sup> Publications that were published in this manner included newsletters, articles, letters, pamphlets or any other type of publication that the church could produce with its own printing equipment and paper supply. Each publication produced in this manner had to contain the printed message “Only for Church Use”—or some equivalent statement. This designation could sometimes be followed by an abbreviated name of the church body publishing the piece, a location number, the date of printing, and the total number of copies printed.<sup>43</sup> As long as the publication was produced on church premises by either a church worker or a group sponsored by a particular church, it was legal and not subject to censorship by state authorities. These publications could be distributed by hand, through the state’s postal system or through the Evangelical Church’s internal mail. Local church administrative offices (*Superintendenturen*) had mailboxes where correspondence and other materials could be dropped off, and therefore distributed among the different churches in a particular district.

Church-sponsored publishing in the GDR, like religious samizdat in Slovakia, expanded significantly in the 1980s and was not confined to dissident intellectuals in the capital city. Aktion Sühnezeichen, as one of the earliest church-sponsored organizations committed to peace and social issues, published one of the few church-sponsored publications to be distributed in both the 1970s and 1980s. Its monthly newsletter (*Monatsbrief*) reported on the activities that had taken place within its summer camps, at the annual assembly and within its regional groups. It contained essays by theologians and helped publicize upcoming summer camp schedules. Church-sponsored publications also supported the intellectual development of Bausoldaten. Participants at the annual gatherings of Bausoldaten received materials that contributed to their awareness of peace issues. One

<sup>42</sup> The Jazz Section in Czechoslovakia took advantage of a similar opportunity to publish and distribute an uncensored bulletin for its members in the early 1980s. Skilling, *Samizdat*, 81–82.

<sup>43</sup> Janice Broun takes note of this method of uncensored publications in East Germany, one of the few to do so. Broun, *Conscience and Captivity*, 113. See also Flotow, “Samizdat in East Berlin,” 204 and Joppke, *East German Dissidents*, 108. The format and wording of the designation “Only for Church Use” was rather inconsistent between different publications and editors. While some editors only included the phrase (or some variation of it), others provided the more specific information about the size and date of the printing. Roland Quester, editor of the environmental newsletter *Streiflichter* in Leipzig, explained this full range of information that he provided on his periodical. Roland Quester, interview by author, Leipzig, Germany, 25 October 2001.

such volume titled *ABC des Friedens* served as the basic handbook for the participants in the later years of this peace seminar and included definitions, essays on the Marxist view of peace (for more informed critiques of this position), essays on the Christian view of peace, and a bibliography of peace-related literature. Though initially edited in 1978, the *ABC des Friedens* had a loose-leaf binding so that new contributions could be inserted in the following years. This format allowed the handbook to be kept up to date with relative ease and put the cumulative work of the peace seminar at the fingertips of its members during annual gatherings, meetings of local groups, or other activities. Pastors Rudolf Albrecht and Harald Bretschneider, both former Bausoldaten and active leaders of the Landeskirche of Saxony, edited this volume.<sup>44</sup> Pastor Albrecht had been a frequent lecturer at the annual gathering since 1970 and Pastor Bretschneider directed the youth ministry of the Landeskirche.

In the 1980s, grassroots publishing flourished, especially from local groups concerned with specific issues. While only a handful of publications were started before 1980 (*Kontakte* since 1969; *INKOTA-Briefe* since 1971), at least 55 new publications were introduced from 1980 to 1987 and an additional 78 were introduced in 1988 or 1989. Most were published as periodicals, though several were one-time volumes addressing specific themes such as *Die Pleiße* (on the environmental situation in Leipzig) and *Die Mücke* (documenting specific political incidents in Leipzig in January of 1989). While the majority were published in Berlin (67), many were published by groups or individuals in Leipzig, Jena, Dresden, Halle, Karl-Marx-Stadt, Schwerin, Magdeburg, Erfurt, Forst, Greifswald, Forst, Wittenberg, Quedlinburg, and Zittau.<sup>45</sup>

Church publishing in the GDR, therefore, differed from that of Czechoslovakia in several key respects. The Evangelical Church in the GDR—to a much greater degree than the Catholic Church in Slovakia—could officially publish materials oriented to the spiritual development of believers. This opportunity made an underground samizdat publishing network less necessary. As a result, grassroots publishing became less oriented toward spiritual development and more oriented toward social-political issues such as peace, the environment and human rights. Church-sponsorship could give a group or organization resources and support to legally publish and distribute materials dedicated to these issues.

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<sup>44</sup> *ABC des Friedens*, 1978, PA–HW.

<sup>45</sup> For a comprehensive table detailing grassroots publications from 1969 to 1989, see Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition*, 756–766.

Local church-sponsored groups published very high quality publications, but often had to make compromises with their church sponsors regarding content. Because the specific church sponsor was responsible for the content of this legally sanctioned samizdat, the publications became subject to internal censorship. This could produce tensions between the responsible church officials, who often wanted to moderate the content and avoid subjects that could get them in trouble with the state authorities, and the editors and authors who sometimes wanted to take a more aggressive stance in their publications. Superintendent Johannes Richter, one of two Superintendents in Leipzig during the 1980s, recalled that many of the groups supported by the church felt that they could get away with saying anything they wanted to in these publications marked "Only for Church Use."<sup>46</sup> As youth pastor in Leipzig during the first half of the 1980s, Pastor Wolfgang Gröger was responsible for many of the publications produced by Leipzig's groups. Pastor Gröger explained that he wanted to see a copy of each publication before it was distributed.<sup>47</sup> In 1989, the state held a pastor and three colleagues responsible for the content of an unofficial publication published within their church and fined them each 1,000 marks. They refused to pay and their church authorities had to cover the entire fine. Keston News Service does not explain what the publication, *Aufbruch* (Fresh start), had published to merit the fine, but presents it as part of a general state crackdown on unofficial publications that began in 1988.<sup>48</sup> The self-censorship certainly affected the content and limited the independence of these church sponsored publications, but by providing equipment, paper, ink, and a place to work, the church leaders who chose to accept this responsibility made it possible for groups dedicated to issues such as peace, environmental protection and the third world to publish and distribute ideas and information to colleagues independent of state control. Some individuals and groups did publish materials secretly with private printing equipment and sometimes with great success. Although these publications were less common than church-sponsored publications in the GDR due to the greater risk and the availability of other options, such publications were free of both church and state censorship.

A closer look at Leipzig illustrates the quality and diversity of grassroots publishing, as well as many of the challenges and tensions that char-

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<sup>46</sup> Johannes Richter, interview by author, Leipzig, Germany, 8 May 2001.

<sup>47</sup> Wolfgang Gröger, interview by author, Leipzig, Germany, 26 October 2001.

<sup>48</sup> "GDR Crackdown on Unofficial Publications," *KNS*, no. 322, 30 March 1989, 16.

acterized the relationship between local groups and their church sponsors. With sixteen publications in the 1980s, Leipzig is only second to Berlin in terms of the number of publications its grassroots activists produced. Several of the publications began in the first half of the decade. Many of Leipzig's church-sponsored groups were formed by students and were therefore sponsored by the church's local youth parish office (*Jugendpfarramt*). The Jugendpfarramt did not provide its groups with financial support, but they had access to its printing equipment and paper supply that it used to publish announcements, information sheets or other materials. The two superintendents' offices maintained mailboxes for every church congregation or organization in Leipzig, so local groups could distribute their materials through this internal mail system. Wolfgang Gröger, the youth pastor in Leipzig in the 1980s, was directly responsible for the groups sponsored by the Jugendpfarramt.

The Working Group for Environmental Protection (*AG Umweltschutz*) sponsored by the Jugendpfarramt, took the lead in Leipzig in promoting environmental protection. It became one of the most organized and active church-based groups in Leipzig. As the GDR's second largest city, environmental problems, particularly air pollution from the use of brown coal, were quite visible in Leipzig.<sup>49</sup> In 1981, students from the theological seminary in Leipzig founded AG Umweltschutz in response to an "information deficit" about environmental protection and the situation in the GDR.<sup>50</sup> In the mid-1970s, the Evangelical Church had increased its engagement with environmental issues by establishing and supporting an environmental research center in Wittenberg. AG Umweltschutz received support and information from this center, but its work received the most direct support from Pastor Gröger and Leipzig's Jugendpfarramt.<sup>51</sup> In November 1981, AG Umweltschutz introduced *Streiflichter*, a two-page monthly newsletter that provided its members with information about upcoming activities and promoted environmental awareness. AG Um-

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<sup>49</sup> Vollbach emphasized that the high level of pollution was quite evident in Leipzig. Ekkehard Vollbach, interview by author, Leipzig, Germany, 18 October 2001.

<sup>50</sup> For information about its foundation and mission statement of AG Umweltschutz see "Entwurf des Selbstverständnisses der AG Umweltschutz Leipzig," *Streiflichter* 3 (February 1982): 1. The *Umweltbibliothek* in Leipzig [hereafter UBL] contains a complete collection of *Streiflichter* (UBL: Z-33) as well as other materials from this group's work in the 1980s. A 1988 issue of *Streiflichter* explained the group's history in Leipzig. "Gemeindarbeit der Arbeitsgruppe Umweltschutz in Leipzig—Rückblick und Ausblick," *Streiflichter* 42 (7 March 1988): 5–7.

<sup>51</sup> Gröger, interview.

weltschutz remained under the close supervision of the Jugendpfarramt. Ralf Elsässer, a founding member of the group and first editor of *Streiflichter*, explained that Pastor Gröger did not want anything printed that was directly critical of the state and reviewed a draft of each issue before its publication and distribution.<sup>52</sup> From its beginning, AG Umweltschutz had a relatively large number of supporters. About sixty-five people in Leipzig and twenty people elsewhere in the GDR received *Streiflichter* within the first year of the group's existence.<sup>53</sup> In addition to these annual and weekly activities, AG Umweltschutz organized several special projects to promote environmental protection. Using the Jugendpfarramt's printing resources, AG Umweltschutz published 3,000 copies of a twenty-nine-page handbook called *Umweltschutz im Haushalt* in 1985. It contained environmental information and tips about products used in the home.<sup>54</sup>

By 1988, issues of *Streiflichter* contained ten to twenty pages and the following year it published and distributed as many as five hundred copies of each monthly issue.<sup>55</sup> In 1988, the environmental research center in Wittenberg published a detailed catalog of each church-based environmental group in the GDR. At this time, Leipzig's AG Umweltschutz had thirty-five to forty active members. Of the fifty-eight groups listed in the catalog, only an environmental group in Dresden had more active members. The catalog also identified AG Umweltschutz as one of only eight environmental groups in the GDR with an environmental library.<sup>56</sup> The environmental group in Berlin was also quite active with a well-known publication called *Umweltblätter* and a library. Roland Quester, who oversaw the library, explained that Leipzig's group was less politically-oriented and more focused on environmentalism than the environmentalists in Berlin.<sup>57</sup> In August 1988, Pastor Klaus Kaden, Gröger's successor,

<sup>52</sup> Ralf Elsässer, interview by author, Leipzig, Germany, 7 November 2001.

<sup>53</sup> *Streiflichter* 4 (March 1982): 2.

<sup>54</sup> AG Umweltschutz, *Umweltschutz im Haushalt: Tägliche Umweltsünden und mögliche Alternativen* (1985), UBL: HA-S-PG4(4)-59.

<sup>55</sup> Each issue of *Streiflichter*, following the designation "Only for Church Use," indicated the total number of copies that had been printed of that issue. Roland Quester, editor of *Streiflichter* from 1987–1989, explained the meaning of these numbers, which make it possible to track the extent of its publication. Quester, interview.

<sup>56</sup> According to the catalog, the Ökologischer Arbeitskreis der Dresdner Kirchenbezirke had seventy-plus members. *Die Karteibroschüre der kirchlichen Umweltgruppen in der DDR: Stand vom November 1988* (Kirchliches Forschungsheim Wittenberg, 1988), UBL: HA-B-PG4-85.

<sup>57</sup> Quester, interview.

granted AG Umweltschutz access to one of the Jugendpfarramt's rooms every Monday from 1:00 to 7:00 p.m. for a library.<sup>58</sup> Although AG Umweltschutz's members had met regularly in the Jugendpfarramt each month since the group's foundation, the establishment of this library opened up new possibilities for the group's work in Leipzig. In addition to functioning as an office where the group's members could meet and work each week, the library also represented the construction of an information center in Leipzig under the protective cover of the Evangelical Church. Anyone could visit this library during its weekly hours, and Quester made an extensive variety of materials available, including *Streiflichter* and over twenty other publications produced by church-based groups in the GDR. Other holdings included essays and reports from the environmental research center in Wittenberg, records and reports of AG Umweltschutz's initiatives in Leipzig, and even materials from Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia that had been translated into German. Through this resource (the library) the general public had legal access to these publications and materials.

Leipzig's Jugendpfarramt also sponsored the Working Group in the Service of Peace (Arbeitsgruppe Friedensdienst), which had been founded by former Bausoldaten in 1981. Arbeitsgruppe Friedensdienst also used the church's internal mail system. It had a mailing list of fifty to sixty people interested in the group's work and mailed materials to them. It marked each publication with the designation "Internal Church Use Only" to indicate that the materials were not intended for the general public. Heinz Bächer, one of the group's founders, recalled the important security reasons for using this designation: "It was clear that if one hundred copies of something were produced, two copies would fall into the hands of state security."<sup>59</sup> AG Friedensdienst, in contrast to several other groups at the Jugendpfarramt, did not edit and distribute its own newsletter. In 1984, however, one of its members, Brigitte Moritz, began editing a monthly newsletter named *Kontakte: Frieden, Umwelt und Dritte-Welt* on behalf of each of the Leipzig's church-based groups. Most issues of *Kontakte* were only two or three pages in length, but provided an important medium for AG Friedensdienst to publicize its activities and share its work with the other groups in Leipzig.

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<sup>58</sup> Letter from Klaus Kaden to AG Umweltschutz, Leipzig, 9 August 1988, SLWA: 9.3.2, JPA, Allgemein, 1986–1991. Roland Quester explained that he had discussed the possibility of using a room at the Jugendpfarramt for some time with Pastor Kaden. Quester, interview.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

## Summary

The existence of independent communication systems is essential for breaking the state's monopoly on information and overcoming the party-state's efforts to restrict society. As a vibrant element of the Slovak secret church, this samizdat contained content designed to support the spiritual development of its readers. It also allowed the secret church to provide uncensored domestic and international news, and a forum for the critical discussion and debate of issues. It thereby became an instrument that the secret church could use to form and shape public opinion in Slovakia. In the GDR, grassroots groups used publishing opportunities available through the Evangelical Church to pursue specific interests, rather than to promote spiritual development.

The nature of church-sponsored publishing illustrates again that East German activism was much more decentralized than in Slovakia. A greater number of smaller groups engaged in publishing promoted a broad range of social issues, ranging from peace and environmental protection to poverty in the third world throughout East Germany. The localized nature of this activism prevented the formation of a single East German peace or environmental movement. Certainly, very strong ties existed between groups pursuing similar interests in different cities. For example, the environmental library in Leipzig run by Roland Quester contained a fairly complete collection of *Umweltblätter*, the most prominent grassroots publication in Berlin. The Jugendpfarramt in Leipzig helped facilitate ties between different groups in Leipzig, as the publication of *Kontakte: Frieden, Umwelt und Dritte-Welt* since 1984 by Brigitte Moritz illustrates.

Analysis of grassroots publishing highlights the limits of the churches as institutions in each country to support or enjoy full freedom of publication. For example, while anything could be written in the secret church's samizdat, the illegality of this activity meant that anyone discovered by the police printing, distributing or simply possessing this samizdat faced prosecution by the state. In the GDR, the Evangelical Church offered institutional support and protection to independent activity, but the Evangelical Church's interest in protecting its autonomy also limited the range of this activity. Articles and periodicals published by independent groups sponsored by the Evangelical Church could be legally read and distributed without state censorship, but the content remained subject to what the church would permit to be published. The development of Catholic samizdat in Slovakia came as a response to the inability of the Catholic



Church—under the constraint of state power—to provide uncensored news and information through official publications. The Evangelical Church in East Germany, with church sponsors setting the limits on what could be published, became self-censoring of publication content. The transparency of content in church-sponsored publications facilitated the monitoring of the groups by both the party-state and the church.

While the content of samizdat emphasized the secret church's focus on the spiritual development of its readers, evidence from this material provides insight into the secret church's position on historical and political issues and oversight of the samizdat's content. One of these positions was the secret church's view of the fascist Slovak State under Monsignor Jozef Tiso. The first issue of *Historický zápisník* in 1986, a samizdat publication that resembled an academic journal, examined the life of Tiso from his training as a young priest to his trial and execution following the end of the Second World War.<sup>60</sup> While not speaking in support of the clerical fascism of Tiso's government, this periodical's effort to challenge "falsifications of Slovak history in mass media" does offer a selective and revisionist slant to the role of the Catholic Church and Tiso during the Second World War. This issue contains the text of a pastoral letter the Slovak bishops issued in 1943 regarding the Jews. Although the Slovak bishops defended the rights of citizens and national groups against persecution without just cause in this document, it only emphasizes the rights of Jews who had converted to Christianity through baptism.<sup>61</sup> Ján Šimulčík's description of this issue of *Historický zápisník* emphasizes that when Bishop Korec first received this issue and saw its focus on Tiso, he was disturbed and did not want a samizdat periodical to become associated with clerical fascism. After reading through it, however, he gave his approval for the issue. While this information provides little insight into the actual content of *Historický zápisník*, it reveals that Korec approved of the publication and also opposed expressions of clerical fascism in the secret church.<sup>62</sup> Shari Cohen, a political scientist who has examined historical consciousness and the emergence of Slovak nationalism after 1989, questioned several former members of the secret church, including a young man named Ján Klepáč, about their view of the Tiso period. Cohen writes, "It was not preservation of ties to

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<sup>60</sup> *Historický zápisník* 1 (1986).

<sup>61</sup> This is Lesňák's characterization of this periodical's focus. See Lesňák, *List z podzemia*, 153–154.

<sup>62</sup> Šimulčík, *Svetlo z podzemia*, 85.

the Slovak state, but preservation of religious belief that brought [Klepáč] and others to the secret church.”<sup>63</sup>

Only in the late 1980s did one of the secret church’s samizdat publications begin to promote a democratic vision for Czechoslovakia. Throughout the 1980s activists in the secret church used samizdat to publicize a number of petition drives, either protesting the arrest of some individual or group active in the secret church, or outlining a series of demands for religious freedom. Activists also used samizdat to announce a public demonstration for greater religious freedom in Bratislava in 1988. In 1988 several activists in the secret church with strong ties to civil and political dissent, including Ján Čarnogurský, founded a samizdat periodical entitled *Bratislavské listy*. This periodical was the most politically oriented of Slovakia’s religious samizdat. In addition to publicizing these petitions and the 1988 demonstration, it also published several documents related to the Movement for Civic Freedom, a Czechoslovak-wide civil dissent movement founded that year, including its manifesto, which proposed several political and economic reforms. In a March 1989 interview with the editors of the Czech samizdat periodical *Alternativa*, Čarnogurský described *Bratislavské listy* as having a Christian-Democratic orientation.<sup>64</sup> Čarnogurský, whose father Pavel had served in the parliament of Tiso’s government, demonstrated his commitment to a democracy based on human rights when he dissociated his Christian Democratic Movement from Slovak émigrés after 1989. Cohen writes, “[the émigrés] insisted on an Independent Slovakia on the model of the wartime state.” Cohen identifies Slovak nationalist émigrés, rather than Catholic nationalists in Slovakia, as the proponents of a revisionist view of Tiso after 1989.<sup>65</sup>

As the process of publishing the article on Tiso illustrates, Bishop Korec had some oversight of the content of religious samizdat. There is little indication that the shift toward political content in the 1980s, particularly the samizdat publishing of Jan Čarnogurský, was subject to Korec (or any other church leaders) oversight. Yet, Čarnogurský—even though active personally in the secret church and his publishing was clearly read by members of the secret church—kept himself formally separate from the secret church in an effort to avoid drawing the party-state’s attention to it. Certainly, the party-state did not make this distinction, but his efforts suggest that even in the late 1980s (at a time when many secret church mem-

<sup>63</sup> Cohen, *Politics Without a Past*, 64.

<sup>64</sup> “O Slovensku a o Slovacích,” *Alternativa* 2 (March 1989): 46.

<sup>65</sup> Cohen, *Politics Without a Past*, 81.

bers were becoming more politically-oriented), there remained an effort to separate religion and politics.

In East Germany—as the official church provided the resources for publication—oversight of publications by grassroots groups was more strongly exercised by the church sponsors (usually local clergy) than in Slovakia. As the experiences of Pastor Stephan Bickhardt illustrate, some activists found that they needed to fully leave the church's protective umbrella to find the freedom to fully challenge the state's power in their publishing. Stephan Bickhardt had been active in Aktion Sühnezeichen since the late 1970s. Through Aktion Sühnezeichen, he had established contacts with the political opposition in Czechoslovakia and Poland which had informed his own opposition to the state. Between 1976 and 1981, Bickhardt maintained contact with members of the Catholic intelligentsia in Wrocław, Kraków and Warsaw and began to examine the meaning of political participation as well as the church's role as a source of power. Bickhardt recalled that he wanted to explore, "What can be learned from Poland and Czechoslovakia from the concept of civil society...or from Václav Benda of Charter 77 who had spoken about the 'parallel polis' and parallel structures. We [Bickhardt and his colleagues] hoped to create a distinct society...connected with the art scene and the church. We organized lectures in our homes, we organized exhibitions in churches, and we founded [*Radix Blätter*]." Bickhardt began *Radix Blätter* in 1985 as a samizdat publication. He produced it at his parents' home with the help of about twenty other people. His goal was to engage theologians, church people, artists, writers, civil rights activists, and other opposition members in discussions related to the concept of Central Europe and civil society. Editions contained several essays and were over one hundred pages in length. He distributed 2,000 or more copies of each issue. Bickhardt remained active with Aktion Sühnezeichen until 1988 and continued his work in the opposition as a founder of Democracy Now in 1989.<sup>66</sup>

Čarnogurský and Bickhardt shared a similar challenge in becoming politically oppositional. Even in the late 1980s, there were limits to what could be done in the religious sphere. Whether that religious sphere was in the underground or with official status, more explicitly politically oppositional activities were perceived by these unofficial editors as being problematic to the religious sphere and therefore they had to disassociate themselves from that sphere. For Čarnogurský, he was not subject to the oversight of clergy in the way that Bickhardt would have been if publish-

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<sup>66</sup> Bickhardt, interview.

ing under church sponsorship. Rather, he sought to try to avoid increasing the party-state's persecution of the secret church. Bickhardt's motivation, rather than protecting the status of the church (which was the church sponsor's objective), was publishing uncensored content more critical of the state. *Radix Blätter*, unlike the church-sponsored publications in the GDR, truly became samizdat (as in self-published.) The lines of disassociation from the religious sphere that Čarnogurský and Bickhardt both made were actually quite gray. Religious belief shaped much of the content of *Bratislavské listy* and *Radix Blätter* and both editors intended the politicization of the readers and institutions in the religious sphere that they had disassociated from. As the next chapter examines, independent publishing networks facilitated the increased social and political engagement of broader segments of Slovaks and East Germans in the public sphere in the 1980s, well before the 1989 revolutions.

## CHAPTER 4

# Constructing New Public Spaces

In the first half of the 1980s, Slovaks and East Germans seeking to act independently of state control began moving their activities into the public sphere. This shift represents an expansion of preexisting spheres created by activists in the secret church and former Bausoldaten. Changes in the international context influenced the development of these new spaces. While the election of Pope John Paul II was critical turning point in Slovakia, the increased militarization of East German society and the stationing of intermediate range nuclear missiles provided the impetus. Slovaks and East Germans brought religious traditions and church services into public forums where they could find freedom from state control. In Slovakia, members of the secret church helped transform religious pilgrimages into free spaces where discontent against state policies could be publicly expressed. East German activists, on the other hand, through the introduction of prayer-for-peace services and peace seminars held in local churches, challenged state policy on a secular issue—militarization—using a theologically grounded vision of peace.

In each case, the state attempted to both co-opt the grassroots initiatives to support its own policies and to restrict the components of the initiatives that did not align with state policy. In Czechoslovakia, the state tried to present the 1985 pilgrimage commemorating the 1,100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of St. Methodius as a cultural event (rather than a religious event) and as a peace rally. In the GDR, the state sought partners within the church against western militarization in favor of its own position that the foundation for peace was an armed socialist state. In the resulting contests between the church, the state and grassroots activists, the limits to state power were revealed when the states not only failed to prevent alternative interpretations of the issues from being presented, but also broader segments of the population (i.e., non-activists) became engaged in the non-conformist activities. The

unofficial publishing networks developed by the secret church in Slovakia and church-sponsored groups in the GDR helped activists mobilize the populations to challenge state power in the newly established public spaces.

### The Polish Pope: John Paul II

The election of a Pole, Karol Wojtyła, as Pope John Paul II in 1978 inspired Slovakia's Catholics to believe that the Vatican had a new interest in their situation. Pope John Paul II introduced a new aggressive and uncompromising stance in dealing with the Communist governments of Eastern Europe. Under Pope Paul VI's (1963–1978) *Ostpolitik*, the Vatican had made preserving the church hierarchy in Czechoslovakia a primary goal, even at the expense of making important concessions to the Communist government. In 1973, Cardinal Casaroli, responsible for the Vatican's *Ostpolitik*, had negotiated the regime's approval of four new bishops, even though all four remained members of *Pacem in Terris*, the state-sponsored organization for priests. This agreement brought the total number of bishops to five, but many Czech and Slovak Catholics criticized the Vatican's tolerance of *Pacem in Terris*. They questioned why the Vatican had not fought for the official recognition of any of the country's secret bishops and argued that it would have been better to have no bishops than compromised ones. In contrast, John Paul II adopted a new line by refusing to compromise with the Communists, particularly with regards to spiritual matters.<sup>1</sup> In 1982 he formally condemned *Pacem in Terris*. This shift in Vatican policy had a noticeable impact on church officials within the church hierarchy in Czechoslovakia who had previously only demonstrated half-hearted resistance to the regime, such as František Cardinal Tomášek in Prague. Father Tomáš Halík, one of three secret priests who advised Tomášek, reported that “under the new Pope, [Cardinal Tomášek] had the courage to act independently of the state authorities.”<sup>2</sup> As a fellow Slav and a close friend of many leaders in the Slovak secret church, Karol Wojtyła's election appears to have given great moral strength and energy to the leaders of the secret church. As Archbishop in Kraków, Wojtyła had secretly ordained many Czech and Slovak priests in the 1970s. Krčmery, who had been friends with Wojtyła since first meeting him in 1973, described him as a protector for the Slovaks. Emphasizing the importance of their shared experiences under Com-

<sup>1</sup> Tomsky, “Pacem in Terris,” 278–279.

<sup>2</sup> Halík, interview.

munism, Krčméry pointed to a bond that undoubtedly was shared by other Catholics in Czechoslovakia by saying: "He has lived all this persecution of Catholics."<sup>3</sup>

Czechoslovak Catholics, emboldened by John Paul II's new stance, began publicly expressing concerns about restrictions on religious liberty. In a 1980 appeal to the Pope, Catholic parents described a number of ways in which the regime persecuted their children for receiving religious education and asked him to bring these violations to the attention of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) review conference in Madrid. The Helsinki Final Act, guaranteeing respect for human rights, had been signed by Czechoslovakia's government at the CSCE in 1975. In addition to criticizing the content of *Katolícké noviny*—which had recently declared that religion should be abolished—the parents pointed to other restrictions: "We are not permitted to have public processions. Even funeral processions have recently been banned from the streets." The appeal concluded with the hope that the Pope would travel to Czechoslovakia: "Your visit would greatly encourage us."<sup>4</sup> In October 1980, 120 of the 150 students at the Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Divinity in Bratislava staged a two-day hunger strike to voice their dissatisfaction with *Pacem in Terris*.<sup>5</sup> The students opposed a seminar by *Pacem in Terris* that encouraged the future collaboration of the theology students with the state. They also protested the impact of *Pacem in Terris* on the Catholic Church: "This organization shatters the unity among priests and between priests and bishops."<sup>6</sup> The official press charged that the Slovak secret church

<sup>3</sup> Krčméry, interview. Father Karel Martinec shared this same sentiment. Karel Martinec, interview by author, Senica, Slovakia, 4 July 1996. For a brief description of Krčméry's first meeting with Karol Wojtyła, see Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť*, 125.

<sup>4</sup> The periodical, *Guardian of Liberty*, republished excerpts from this appeal, but only identified the authors as "Catholic Parents" in Czechoslovakia. It also contained no specific information about the date of the appeal, except that it occurred prior to the October 20–21, 1980 hunger strike in Bratislava. "Hunger Strike By Theological Students," *Guardian of Liberty* 24, no. 6 (November–December 1980).

<sup>5</sup> The text of this Vatican report (in turn based on a report from the *Kathpress News Agency*) mistakenly reports that 150 students participated in the hunger strike. "Reported Hunger Strike By Bratislava Theology Students," *Summary of World Broadcasts (SWB)*, 17 November 1980.

<sup>6</sup> The Keston Institute archive has a German version of this statement, formally dated October 28, 1980 (one week after the hunger strike). The seminary subsequently expelled eleven of the students. The anonymous report describing the expulsion of the eleven is dated February 13, 1981. Copies of both documents can be found in KI: CZ/ROM 11 Activities Disapproved by the State.

had organized the hunger strike at the school, and Czech religious samizdat did voice support for this protest action. However, the secret church never acknowledged a role in organizing the strike and the theology students probably acted on their own.<sup>7</sup> The language used by both the Catholic parents and the seminary students in 1980 suggest the influence of John Paul II and the Vatican's stronger stance against *Pacem in Terris*. One observer has connected this hunger strike to Cardinal Tomášek's stronger position against *Pacem in Terris*.<sup>8</sup> Both actions demonstrate the increased willingness of Slovak Catholics to publicly express dissatisfaction with the existing religious situation.

### The 1985 Velehrad Pilgrimage

The tradition of religious pilgrimages in Slovakia became a foundation from which the Slovak secret church broadened its range of activities in the 1980s. Pilgrimages had been an important part of Slovak religious life since the Middle Ages. Over thirty pilgrimage sites exist throughout Slovakia and Slovak pilgrims also honored several religious sites in the Czech lands. Until 1949, when state permission to hold public gatherings such as pilgrimages became mandatory, local church officials had organized the yearly pilgrimages and services at these sites. Thereafter, with the exceptions of 1956 and 1968, there had been little activity at these sites on pilgrimage days. In the early 1980s, however, public interest in pilgrimages resumed. An impressive number of Catholics attended pilgrimages in Slovakia in the 1980s. Between 1982 and 1985, samizdat reports only carried information for the pilgrimages to Šaštín and Levoča, the two most popular Slovak pilgrimages. An estimated 15,000 people attended the Šaštín pilgrimage in 1983; attendance jumped to 50,000 in 1984.<sup>9</sup> An estimated 100,000 pilgrims attended the pilgrimage at Levoča in both 1982 and 1983.<sup>10</sup>

The new role and importance of pilgrimages was established at the 1985 pilgrimage at Velehrad. Velehrad, a popular pilgrimage site in Moravia, had

<sup>7</sup> In December 1980, an article in Bratislava's *Pravda* described the extensive secret church structure that existed illegally in Slovakia and accused it of organizing this hunger strike. "Bratislava 'Pravda' Attacks the Catholic Church," *SWB*, 3 January 1981.

<sup>8</sup> Tomsý, "Pacem in Terris," 280.

<sup>9</sup> "Šaštínska put 1983," *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 4 (1983): 2; "Šaštínsky prihovor otca Biskupa Gabrisa," *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 5 (1984): 8; "Šaštín '84," *Výber* 4 (1984): 38.

<sup>10</sup> "Annual Pilgrimage to Levoča," *KNS*, no. 156 (August 16, 1982): 3–4. Also, see *Výber* 3 (1984): 7.



already received an estimated 40,000 pilgrims in 1984. The 1985 Velehrad pilgrimage commemorated the 1,100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of St. Methodius, who along with Cyril, had introduced Christianity (and the Slavic liturgy) to the Great Moravian Empire in the ninth century. The work of Cyril and Methodius is particularly important to Slovak Catholics, who trace their political, cultural and religious history to this early empire and the arrival of these monks. Even the Communist authorities and non-believers recognized the important cultural contribution of the two missionaries.<sup>11</sup>

Several months prior to the pilgrimage, Czechoslovakia's Catholics and the Communist authorities contested the direction of the commemoration. At the center of the dispute was the question of whether Pope John Paul II would be permitted to attend the event. The Pope had made his first visit to Poland as early as 1979, and Czechoslovakia's Catholics hoped this anniversary would yield a papal visit. An August 1984 letter to President Husák, signed simply the "Youth of ČSSR," demanded that the Pope be permitted to attend the 1,100<sup>th</sup> anniversary event. The authors indicated that they were Catholics from Banská Bystrica in central Slovakia and argued that there was popular support for a papal visit: "We are in the jubilee year of St. Methodius. Thousands of young hearts put their signature on the request that the Holy Father John Paul II come to our country for this jubilee celebration. We join with František Cardinal Tomášek, who personally invited the Holy Father to this celebration. Esteemed Mr. President, if these thousands of signatures are [too] few, we are willing to collect additional thousands from young people to again document for you the desire of the absolute majority of inhabitants of the CSSR, so that the Holy Father comes to our republic for this precious jubilee occasion."<sup>12</sup> In February 1984, Cardinal Tomášek formally invited the Pope to Velehrad, and over 17,000 Catholic youth in Czechoslovakia signed a statement demonstrating their support for this visit.<sup>13</sup> Cardinal Tomášek also cited this petition action in a letter to the ČSSR government requesting permission for the visit.<sup>14</sup> A samizdat author analyzing the importance of the Velehrad celebration for Slovaks and the meaning of the petition wrote: "It is a new first in the public life of our church."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Kružliak, "The Heritage of Saints Cyril and Methodius."

<sup>12</sup> Letter to President Husák from the Youth of ČSSR, 29 August 1984, 1, KI: CZ ROM 7/4 1<sup>st</sup> Methodius Celebrations 1985.

<sup>13</sup> "Pozvanie sv. Otca do Československa," *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 3 (1984): 17.

<sup>14</sup> *Una Sancta Catholica* Turice (1984): 35.

<sup>15</sup> "Pozvanie sv. Otca do Československa," 17–18.

Despite the authorities' refusal, Catholic support for the Papal visit continued. On New Years Day 1985, Cardinal Tomášek sent a letter to the Pope with an additional 500 signatures that had been collected over Christmas. The letter reaffirmed the desire of Czechoslovak Catholics for the Pope to come to Velehrad for the Methodius commemoration on September 14. It also invited the Pope to visit Šaštín, a Slovak pilgrimage site, on the following day. Šaštín was consecrated to the patron of the Slovak nation, the Virgin Mary.<sup>16</sup> The authorities continued to refuse permission for the visit.

As the Velehrad pilgrimage approached, members of the secret church in both the Czech lands and Slovakia began making plans to alter the length and nature of the commemoration by organizing a special night program for the pilgrimage. They wanted to invite the Catholic youth of Czechoslovakia to come to the site on Saturday, July 6, 1985, for a special program of song and prayer during the night preceding the official commemoration scheduled for Sunday, July 7. Night programs had already become a popular part of pilgrimages in Slovakia. Over 50,000 pilgrims attended the night program at the Levoča pilgrimage in 1983.<sup>17</sup> At Šaštín in 1984, a night program again organized by Vladimír Jukl had also preceded the regular pilgrimage celebration.<sup>18</sup> The plan for a night program at Velehrad appears to have originated from both Moravian and Slovak sources. Catholic youth in Moravia invited the Catholic youth of Slovakia and Bohemia to Velehrad on the Saturday for a program that would include prayers for the unity of the church, the Pope, bishops and others in the church. The Slovak religious samizdat *Výber* helped distribute this invitation by prominently publishing it on the back of the front cover of a spring 1985 issue.<sup>19</sup> Mikloško, though referring to the Moravian Catholic's plan, credits Vladimír Jukl with the idea of introducing the night program at Velehrad. Mikloško personally presented Jukl's plan for a night program to Tomášek, who supported the idea. Though the local priest and bishop responsible for Velehrad refused to officially approve the night program or permit the youth to spend the night in Velehrad's basilica, the plan for the night program went on.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 2 (1985): 19.

<sup>17</sup> "Více než sto tisíc poutníků na Levočské hoře 3.7.1983," *Informace o církvi* 9 (1983): 13.

<sup>18</sup> "Šaštín '84," *Výber* 4 (1984): 38. See also Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť*, 136.

<sup>19</sup> *Výber* 4 (1985).

<sup>20</sup> Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť*, 128–130.

On Saturday afternoon, July 6, the Velehrad celebration made its informal start with the arrival of an estimated 5,000 young Catholics. Accounts of their activities filled subsequent samizdat periodicals and paint a vivid picture of their activities prior to the formal opening of the celebration at 10:00 AM on Sunday morning. As they arrived on Saturday, the young pilgrims sat in small groups in front of the basilica, some talking with friends and others singing songs, sometimes with the accompaniment of a guitar. Bishop Korec visited with the young pilgrims in the afternoon and remained with them throughout the night.<sup>21</sup> After an evening mass inside the basilica, the pilgrims spent the night outside with one group in front of the basilica and the other in a nearby field. Each group stayed awake the entire night and observed a program of prayer, meditation and singing. During the night, both groups chanted slogans such as "We want cloisters," "Long live Tomášek," and "Long live the Pope." One report indicated that the pilgrims also chanted "Let the Pope Come" for about twenty-five minutes.<sup>22</sup> One member of the Slovak secret church apparently spent Saturday afternoon and night with a tape recorder recording the songs, chants, and conversations with the pilgrims. A Slovak samizdat periodical published excerpts from this recording that captured some of the different hopes and concerns of those in attendance, including the disappointment of one young pilgrim that the state authorities viewed the pilgrimage and anniversary celebration as a peace event. The pilgrim, speaking sometime late Saturday evening, described his mixed response to the weekend: "I assumed that many believers would participate in this pilgrimage, but I am very surprised by the multitude of people who are already here today. I am very enthusiastic about it, because I expect rich spiritual fruits from this pilgrimage. I regret, of course—and I also think everyone else does—that we may not have the Holy Father here among us. But on the other hand, we are glad that he is represented here by Cardinal Casaroli."<sup>23</sup> Early in the morning a fifty-year-old priest, asked for his reaction to this "uncommon" event, replied: "We spent this night at Velehrad together with Saints Cyril and Methodius. And it was very beautiful. There are groups of young believers here from all over Slovakia and also from the Czech lands, but a preponderance

<sup>21</sup> "Velehrad '85," *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 3 (1985): 17. The largest Czech religious samizdat periodical republished this report. "Velehrad 1985, videný z Slovenska," *Informace o cirkvi* 10 (1985), 6–7.

<sup>22</sup> "Boli sme na Velehrade," *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 5 (1985): 5–6.

<sup>23</sup> "Velehrad '85 z magnetofonoveho zaznamu," *Výber* 9 (1985): 12.

here are Slovaks.”<sup>24</sup> Though located in Moravia, the night program at Velehrad was of particular interest to Slovak Catholics, and other observers also noted the high presence of Slovaks at Velehrad.

The enthusiasm of the young Catholics who had arrived early to spend the night at Velehrad carried over to the official celebrations on Sunday. Despite the state’s efforts to curtail attendance by canceling public transportation to Velehrad, pilgrims from all over Czechoslovakia arrived, many on foot, to join those who had spent the night singing, praying, and chanting.<sup>25</sup> One samizdat periodical reported that at a 7:00 AM mass outside the Basilica, the pilgrims who had arrived only that morning were surprised that the young people, following the singing of the papal hymn, broke into chants of “Long live John Paul II!” and “Let us have the Holy Father!”<sup>26</sup> The youth had been chanting these slogans throughout the night, and like a team coming out of a high-school pep rally, they were ready for the celebration to begin. By 10:00 AM, when the official celebration was scheduled to begin, an estimated 100,000–250,000 pilgrims had gathered outside the Basilica in the center of Velehrad.<sup>27</sup> A local Party official opened the celebration by welcoming everyone to what he called the St. Methodius “Peace Celebration.” In response to this designation, the pilgrims responded negatively with whistles and shouts of “We want Holy Mass!”<sup>28</sup> Following the singing of the state anthem, the Minister of Culture, Dr. Milan Klusak, spoke. Again, the pilgrims expressed their dissatisfaction with the official spin he gave to the importance of the anniversary. Several samizdat periodicals reported the following exchange between Klusak and the pilgrims:

[Dr. Klusak] grasped the situation and therefore improvised as he spoke. In order to stress that he did not consider the celebration to be a peace celebration, he said that he came for the pilgrimage to celebrate Methodius’ memory. The crowd corrected him by chanting “Saint, Saint.” When he said that Cyril and Methodius brought us a language

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>25</sup> “Velehrad 1985,” *Vzkříšení* 2 (1985): 15.

<sup>26</sup> “Boli sme na Velehrade,” 5.

<sup>27</sup> Religious samizdat periodicals reported this range of pilgrims in attendance. See “Boli sme na Velehrade,” 8; “Velehrad ’85,” 18; “Velehrad 1985,” *Vzkříšení* 2 (1985): 15; and “Velehrad nas,” *Informace o církví* 10 (1985): 6. Photographs of the pilgrims gathered around the Basilica at Velehrad on July 7—taken from different angles—indicate that the pilgrims filled every inch of the square and support the magnitude of the size of the crowd as reported by religious samizdat. KI: photo collection, photos #1793 and #1876.

<sup>28</sup> “Boli sme na Velehrade,” 7.

and alphabet, the people supplemented it with "Faith, Faith!" The surprised minister then began a discussion with the people by saying "The Bishop will speak about Faith to you. We have divided up the work."...the young people replied to him: "Freedom, Religious Freedom." The minister argued back to the youth and everyone else: "If you did not have [religious freedom], you would not be here."<sup>29</sup>

The pilgrims responded to the remainder of Klusak's speech with chants: "We Want the Holy Father!" "We Want Religious Freedom," and "We Want Bishops!" In contrast to their dissatisfaction with the state authorities' remarks, the pilgrims enthusiastically supported the words of the church officials. During the heckling of Minister Klusak, the pilgrims had also chanted "Long Live Cardinal Tomášek!" and "Casaroli!"<sup>30</sup> Cardinal Tomášek read a letter from the Pope and during the Holy Mass Cardinal Casaroli switched between Czech and Slovak while delivering his sermon.<sup>31</sup> Accounts indicate that Cardinal Tomášek and Cardinal Casaroli clearly were surprised by the high attendance and the enthusiasm of the pilgrims. Afterwards, Cardinal Tomášek is quoted telling a group of young people, "This is not reality, this is a dream."<sup>32</sup>

At the 1985 Velehrad pilgrimage, Catholic activists transformed the traditional pilgrimage into a space where Catholics could meet publicly and in large numbers to worship freely and openly. Even before the official start of the commemoration on Sunday, the night program had already expanded the scope of the religious pilgrimage. The relatively large number of Catholic youth that chose to come early, and the fact that most were reportedly from Slovakia, indicates both the strength of Catholicism in Slovakia and the Slovak secret church's ability to mobilize its members. Václav Benda afterwards commented on its significance: "Velehrad was an effective demonstration that the experiment of splitting the church was condemned to failure and ridiculous from the beginning. It must presently be clear from this pilgrimage...that the prohibitions or radical restriction on the church drove several million active believers into the underground."<sup>33</sup> Velehrad's night program, by allowing young people to meet with other Catholics and express their faith publicly, expanded the scope

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 7. A similar account of this exchange written down by a Slovak pilgrim appeared in the Czech samizdat. "Velehrad 1985," *Vzkříšení* 2 (1985): 16. See also Korec, *Od barbarskej noci na slobode*, 342.

<sup>30</sup> "Velehrad '85," *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť*, 18.

<sup>31</sup> "Boli sme na Velehrade," 7–8.

<sup>32</sup> "Velehrad '85," *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť*, 18.

<sup>33</sup> Václav Benda, "Ako ďalej po Velehrade?" *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 2 (1986): 4.

of the traditional religious pilgrimage and openly challenged the state's efforts to deemphasize the religious significance of the Methodius commemoration.

### Slovak Pilgrimages: A New Public Space

Pilgrimage attendance and the number of sites hosting pilgrimages in Slovakia increased significantly between 1986 and 1988.<sup>34</sup> Levoča, in Eastern Slovakia, received the largest number of pilgrims with an estimated 150,000 in 1986,<sup>35</sup> 200,000–230,000 in 1987,<sup>36</sup> and estimates as high as 280,000–300,000 in 1988.<sup>37</sup> The number of pilgrims to Šaštín, a small village located north of Bratislava near the Moravian border, grew steadily from estimates of 40,000–50,000 in 1986,<sup>38</sup> and 60,000 in 1987,<sup>39</sup> to 60,000–70,000 in 1988.<sup>40</sup> The number of pilgrims to Gaboltov, estimated at 20,000–25,000 in 1985,<sup>41</sup> increased dramatically to estimates of 30,000–50,000 in 1986<sup>42</sup> to numbers as high as 100,000 in 1987 and 1988.<sup>43</sup> Large numbers of pilgrims also visited traditionally less popular pilgrimage sites in Slovakia during this period. Lutina, an important Greek Catholic pilgrimage site in Eastern Slovakia, received 40,000 pilgrims in 1986<sup>44</sup> and 50,000 in 1987.<sup>45</sup> Topoľčany received 25,000 pilgrims in

<sup>34</sup> Attendance at Slovak pilgrimages in 1989 was also quite impressive, but there is much less information about that year's pilgrimages than for earlier years. This is probably due to the fact that reports of the summer pilgrimages usually appeared in late fall samizdat issues, by which time the Velvet Revolution had already begun.

<sup>35</sup> "Levoča 1986," *Voice of America (VOA)* 12 July 1986.

<sup>36</sup> "Record Numbers Attend Slovak Pilgrimages," *Keston News Service*, 280 (23 July 87): 19; "Message from Ján Čarnogurský to Keston College"; "Levoča púť 1987," *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 4 (1987): 7.

<sup>37</sup> "Mariánsky rok na Slovensku," *Katolícky mesačník* 4 (1988): 1; Peter Martin, "The Pilgrimage to Levoča," *RFE/RL*, 14 July 1988, 19. Another samizdat periodical estimated the attendance in 1988 at "more than 200,000." See "Myšlienky z Levočskej púte," *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 3 (1988): 3.

<sup>38</sup> "Pútné slávnosti na Slovensku v r. 1986," *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 1 (1987): 17–19.

<sup>39</sup> "Šaštín—September 1987," *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 5 (1987): 11.

<sup>40</sup> "Šaštín—'88," *Katolícky mesačník* 5 (1988): 1.

<sup>41</sup> "Gaboltov '85," *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 3 (1985): 20.

<sup>42</sup> "Pútné slávnosti na Slovensku v r 1986," 17–19.

<sup>43</sup> "Message from Ján Čarnogurský to Keston College," KI: CZ ROM 7/4 Pilgrimages; "Púť v Gaboltove," *VOA*, 24 July 1988.

<sup>44</sup> "Pout' Reckokatoliku v Lutiné 1986," *Informace o církvi* 10 (1986): 10.

<sup>45</sup> "Message from Ján Čarnogurský."

1988.<sup>46</sup> Due to the nature of a pilgrimage, usually an outdoor event with people sitting or standing in a town square or in a nearby field, only estimates, probably made by members of secret church attending the pilgrimage, are available. Ján Čarnogurský reported that in 1987, as he became aware of the political significance of the pilgrimages, he began travelling to pilgrimages, and one of his main goals was to estimate the number of pilgrims.<sup>47</sup> Although not an exact count, these estimates are significant as a measure of the increase in multitude of pilgrims attending a particular pilgrimage, an increase that the authors of samizdat reports on pilgrimages were certainly observing.

The Slovak secret church also continued to promote the night program for pilgrimages after 1985, and attendance at night programs increased throughout Slovakia. A samizdat article describing the pilgrimage celebrations that had taken place throughout Slovakia in 1986 announced that in 1987 night programs were scheduled in Gaboltov and Úhorná in addition to Levoča and Šaštín.<sup>48</sup> In 1988, an estimated 50,000 pilgrims attended the night program at Gaboltov,<sup>49</sup> and 100,000 attended the night program during the Marian Year pilgrimage in Levoča.<sup>50</sup> The following year, 5,000–10,000 people attended the night program at the smaller pilgrimage site of Lutina.<sup>51</sup>

The night program at Šaštín in 1988 demonstrates the inability of state authorities to stop this new element of the pilgrimage tradition and its increasing political orientation at the local level. Father Karel Martinec, a priest from the nearby town of Senica, represented the bishop's office at Šaštín in 1988. One of his responsibilities that year was to reassure the police that nothing besides the normal pilgrimage activities on Sunday would take place that weekend. On the Saturday evening before the official start of the pilgrimage, a large number of pilgrims had already arrived at Šaštín. That evening, Father Martinec met with state authorities in a building near where the people had assembled outside. Father Martinec reported that when the officials announced that they were going to go to sleep, he insisted that they stay awake so that he would not be later accused of having initiated any of the activities for the night program. Father

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<sup>46</sup> "Pilgrimage at Topoľčany," *SWB*, 13 September 1988.

<sup>47</sup> Čarnogurský, interview. Documents in the Keston Institute archive indicate that he sent reports of these estimates to Western news organizations. See for example, "Message from Ján Čarnogurský."

<sup>48</sup> "Pútné slávnosti na Slovensku v r. 1986," 19.

<sup>49</sup> "Pút' v Gaboltove," *VOA*, 24 July 1988.

<sup>50</sup> "Mariánsky rok na Slovensku," 1.

<sup>51</sup> "O puti v Lutine," *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 5 (1989): 14.

Martinec clearly expected something to happen that night. At that moment, a policeman came into the room to report that organized activities had begun on their own among the young pilgrims assembled outside.<sup>52</sup> The night program began sometime before 9:00 PM. In addition to two holy masses, singing and prayer, the young people assembled outside voiced political demands that the secret church had been articulating through its samizdat network the previous year.<sup>53</sup> According to Martinec, the young people began the night program by reading aloud thirty-one demands against state interference in religious matters.<sup>54</sup> Since 1987, members of the secret church in Slovakia and in the Czech lands had been collecting signatures for this petition. Samizdat reports indicate that during the night at Šaštín, the young people responded with applause to chants of “We Want Religious Freedom!” “We Want the Pope!” “Long Live Father Bishop Korec!” “Long Live Cardinal Tomášek!” and “Long Live Father Bishop Sokol!” (Bishop Sokol had recently been named Bishop to Trnava and was scheduled to lead the main Holy Mass the following day.) During the night, the young people at Šaštín spoke about the empty bishops’ seats, and the issue of abolishing state control over the church and circulated the thirty-one point petition on religious freedom.<sup>55</sup>

All reports indicate that the police and other authorities in Slovakia were fairly ineffective in their efforts to clamp down on pilgrimages. Samizdat reports indicate that the pilgrims were quite aware of secret police agents dressed in civilian clothes and using cameras and videorecorders to document the event, but their presence apparently did little to deter their activities. As early as the 1984 pilgrimage to Levoča, police put several obstacles in way of pilgrims, such as running road checks to back up traffic to the site, by canceling train and bus service to Levoča, and even cutting down trees to block the road to the basilica. More subtle efforts focused on keeping young people away from Levoča by scheduling a concert by a Slovak pop star in a nearby town. Some schools scheduled special activities on the day of pilgrimages, and others even posted notices banning participation in the pilgrimage.<sup>56</sup> Police efforts took a more vio-

<sup>52</sup> Martinec, interview. From the interview, it was quite clear that Father Martinec, though exercising caution, was excited by and supportive of the night program.

<sup>53</sup> “Šaštín—’88,” 1.

<sup>54</sup> Martinec, interview.

<sup>55</sup> “Šaštín—’88,” 1–3.

<sup>56</sup> “Levoča—the Slovak National Shrine,” *KNS* 214 (6 December 1984). For references to the presence of the secret police at Velehrad in 1985, see “Velehrad 85—spomienka študentov,” *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 3 (1986): 17 and “Boli sme na Velehrade,” 5.



lent turn in 1986, when militia used dogs to break up groups of pilgrims making their way to Gaboltov.<sup>57</sup> Also in 1986, the police interrogated Jozef Holko, a secret priest, and Anton Selecký, a Catholic activist, for their activities earlier in the year at the Šaštín and Levoča pilgrimages. Holko's interrogation focused on the fact that he had heard confessions at Levoča and Selecký for having written up reports of the pilgrimages.<sup>58</sup>

The Slovak secret church contributed to the popularity of pilgrimages and their night programs in Slovakia in the later half of the 1980s. The Slovak secret church used its samizdat network to inform its members about previous pilgrimages and to promote attendance at upcoming ones. From 1986 to 1989, the issues of *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť*, *Rodinné spoločenstvo* and later *Katolícky mesačník* published extensive articles and reports about Slovak pilgrimages. This coverage included first hand reports of pilgrims' experiences, often including descriptions of their walk to the site and the activities of the night program. These samizdat periodicals also frequently published transcripts of prayers and sermons spoken during Holy Mass at a pilgrimage, as well as historical information about different pilgrimage sites.<sup>59</sup> They also published schedules and information about upcoming pilgrimages in Slovakia.<sup>60</sup> As a result of this coverage, a written record of the experiences, worship service, activities, and even the chants at pilgrimages has been preserved in written form. Catholics unable to attend a particular pilgrimage could learn about what had been said and done at a particular pilgrimage through these accounts. In addition to its samizdat network, information about pilgrimages was shared through the communities of the secret church. Čarnogurský reported that many of the secret church's communities "visited these pilgrimages collectively as groups."<sup>61</sup>

The popularity of pilgrimages in Slovakia also received a boost from Pope John Paul II in 1987 when he designated the period from June 7, 1987 (the feast of the descent of the Holy Ghost) to August 15, 1988 (the feast of the ascension of Virgin Mary) as a "Year of Mary" or "Marian Year" to mark the beginning of the church's preparations for the new millennium. The Pope's announcement was intended for Catholics all over the

<sup>57</sup> "Militia Set Dogs on Pilgrims (Czechoslovakia)," *KNS* 257 (21 August 1986).

<sup>58</sup> "Slovak Catholics Interrogated," *KNS* 264 (27 November 1986).

<sup>59</sup> See "Modlitba na záver mariánskeho Roku," *Katolícky mesačník* 6 (1988): 5–7. Another article recounts the history of the Šaštín pilgrimage site from 916–1987. "Šaštín," *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 4 (1987): 8–10.

<sup>60</sup> "Letná—putnická—aktivita 1989," *Katolícky mesačník* 5 (1989): 6.

<sup>61</sup> Čarnogurský, interview.

world, but Mikloško, again illustrating the influence of the Pope on the members of the Slovak secret church, writes: "We thought it was 'our' year. The lay movements in Slovakia created a year round program of pilgrimages to which they invited all believers."<sup>62</sup>

The leaders of the secret church designed a program that assigned a different theme to each month of the Marian Year, such as "Mary and the Holy Spirit" for June 1987, "Mary and the Renewal of Young People" for November 1987, and "Mary: the Mother of Bishops, Especially the Pope" for June 1988. The introduction preceding this part of the program in *Myšlienky z večeradla*, one of several Slovak samizdat periodicals to publish this program, indicates that the themes were intended to extend into other spheres of spiritual life in addition to pilgrimages: "[These themes] may be the subject of meditation and prayers of every type of community, and in the contents of sermons and evening devotions in churches and at pilgrimage sites." Pilgrimages were to be a central part of the Marian Year celebrations and the next part of the program detailed the pilgrimage activities for the year. According to the appeal and wish of the Pope, Catholics were instructed to attend Holy Mass at least once a month at a church consecrated to the Virgin Mary: "Obviously in winter go only to the nearest church. But, in the summer months, we will meet at one of the chosen [pilgrimage] sites in Slovakia." The program then listed the pilgrimage schedule for the Marian Year indicating that it would begin with a special pilgrimage at Šaštín on June 6 and 7 (Saturday and Sunday), several months before its annual pilgrimage. In addition to Šaštín, night programs were planned for each of the other pilgrimages on the schedule.<sup>63</sup> *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* and *Rodinné spoločenstvo* published identical programs of the Marian Year activities, as well as progress reports of the activities during the year.<sup>64</sup> To help prepare Slovak Catholics for the Marian Year, the editors of *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* introduced a series of articles that described the rich pilgrimage tradition in Slovakia: "In the Marian Year 1987/88 we want our readers to become familiar with the history of the significant Marian pilgrimage sites in Slovakia." Essentially a guide to Slovakia's pilgrimages, one issue in this series identified each

<sup>62</sup> Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť*, 137.

<sup>63</sup> "Program Mariánskeho roku 1987/1988 na Slovensku," *Myšlienky z večeradla* 5 (1987): 11.

<sup>64</sup> See "Program Mariánskeho roku 1987–1988 na Slovensku," *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 3 (1987): 26–27 and "Pohľad na Mariánky rok na Slovensku," *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 1 (1988): 2–6. This article in *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* describes the activities of the first half of the year and reminds readers of remaining events.

of the thirty-two pilgrimage sites in Slovakia with basic historical information about each site. Another article in the series told the history of the “Church of the Holy Mother” in Nitra, where the closing pilgrimage of the Marian Year had been scheduled.<sup>65</sup> At the pilgrimage in Nitra closing the Marian Year in August 1988, 70,000 of 150,000 total pilgrims who attended the event had attended the Saturday evening mass. At midnight, the pilgrims reportedly lit candles to commemorate a demonstration for religious freedom in Bratislava earlier in March that the police had violently broken up. Later in the night program at Nitra, amongst the prayers and singing, the young people spending the night in Nitra also voiced demands for bishops to fill the empty seats in the dioceses and for freedom to distribute religious literature.<sup>66</sup>

At the pilgrimage, the members of the secret church could do openly and publicly what they had done since their foundation: prayer, meditation, and worship. Rather than finding safety in small numbers by meeting in private apartments, the pilgrimage tradition allowed the secret church members to practice their faith publicly, on a larger scale, and in fellowship with Catholics not active in the secret church. Ján Čarnogurský, reporting on the significance of pilgrimages in Slovakia, writes: “Whilst they last, pilgrimages solve a basic problem of our society—the problem of being outnumbered by the police...The police are unable even to act against individuals on pilgrimages, because they are protected in the solidarity of numbers...[This] feeling of safety gives the pilgrims another feeling—that of freedom. On a pilgrimage they can act according to their convictions and openly display their religious faith.”<sup>67</sup> Although the secret church had traditionally distanced itself from the political opposition, the pilgrimage tradition facilitated a shift towards a new engagement in the public sphere. For members of the secret church, this issue of religious freedom could always be discussed among fellow members through its communities and samizdat press. Chants for religious freedom and in support of certain church officials had been first voiced publicly to a significant gathering of people at Velehrad in 1985. The pilgrimage tradition provided a public space and forum where political demands articulated by

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<sup>65</sup> “Mariánske pútnické miesta na Slovensku,” *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 4 (1987): 7; “Mariánske pútnické miesta na Slovensku: 2. časť,” *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 1 (1988): 27–29 and “Mariánske pútnické miesta na Slovensku: 4. časť,” *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 3 (1988): 20–22.

<sup>66</sup> “Slovaks Mark End of Marian Year,” *KNS* 308 (8 September 1989): 7.

<sup>67</sup> Čarnogurský, “The Underground Church,” 36.

the secret church could be discussed, debated, and shared with the broader public in relative safety.

### **East Germany: Carving out a Public Space in Leipzig**

In the 1980s, pastors and local church parishes expanded the Evangelical Church's support of independent activity by sponsoring local and regional groups throughout the GDR. These groups pursued issues at the local level in much the same way that Aktion Sühnezeichen and the former Bausoldaten's regional groups had done in the previous two decades. While many groups addressed the issue of peace, others focused on environmental protection and poverty in the third world. Their existence, membership, and activities varied from city to city, depending on the initiative of individuals and the willingness of a local pastor or church community to sponsor their activities. Without church sponsorship, these groups had little opportunity to pursue their interests and goals in the public sphere. This sponsorship brought a degree of protection from state interference, as well as access to printing resources and church space for meetings. Groups had existed without church sponsorship before this time, but they had had little possibility of engaging specific issues in the public sphere. Many church-based groups existed in East Berlin, but they existed also in cities and towns throughout the GDR, including Jena, Erfurt, Dresden and Leipzig.<sup>68</sup> Despite their small size, Leipzig's groups pursued activities in the public sphere in the 1980s that advocated political and social change and received active support from individuals outside of the Evangelical Church's membership. At the same time, however, these groups did not have free reign and their activities were subject to limits, imposed by both local church leaders and state officials.

The Evangelical churches in Leipzig belonged to the Landeskirche of Saxony, which was based in Dresden. As the second largest city in the GDR, the Evangelical Church divided Leipzig into two districts for administrative reasons, each of which was headed by a superintendent. As

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<sup>68</sup> In addition to artistic and cultural circles, several Lutheran peace groups existed in Jena, including the Jena Peace Community, estimated at 200 activists in 1983. Bruce Allen also discusses peace activities in East Berlin, Weimar and Dresden, but he does not discuss Leipzig or any of its groups. Allen, *Germany East*, 110–113. For a comparative study of groups active in the late 1980s in East Berlin, Erfurt and Leipzig, see Patricia Jo Smith, "Democratizing East Germany."

senior pastors, the superintendents were important spiritual leaders and continued to give sermons, but they primarily oversaw the specific administrative needs of the churches in Leipzig. Johannes Richter, superintendent of Leipzig-West since 1978, and Friedrich Magirius, superintendent of Leipzig-East after stepping down as director of Aktion Sühnezeichen in 1982, worked together closely in directing the Evangelical Church's work in Leipzig during the 1980s.

Only two Evangelical churches existed within the wide ring that circled Leipzig's center, and each fell under the jurisdiction of a different superintendent. The Thomaskirche (St. Thomas' Church), renowned as a historic landmark since Bach had been buried in a prominent grave in front of the altar after the composer's long career as the church's music director, belonged to Leipzig-West and Superintendent Richter's office was located in a building attached to the church. The Nikolaikirche (St. Nicholas Church), a short walk away, belonged to Leipzig-East and only a small square separated Superintendent Magirius's office from the church. Leipzig also had a specially designated youth pastor who oversaw the church's youth parish office (*Jugendpfarramt*) that ministered to the needs of Leipzig's youth. The youth pastor, Wolfgang Gröger, worked alongside both of the superintendents, but his supervisor was the youth pastor of the Landeskirche, Harald Bretschneider, in Dresden. The Jugendpfarramt's office was also located within the ring, in a church building near the Thomaskirche. The Evangelical Church had over sixty parishes skirting Leipzig's ring and in the city's suburbs. It also operated a theological seminary in Leipzig, so many theology students lived and studied in the city. The Landeskirche of Saxony also had an historic association with the Reformed church so its pastors worked closely with those congregations in Leipzig.

Until the 1980s, organized independent activity in the GDR had been limited to Aktion Sühnezeichen and the Bausoldaten. Intellectuals such as Rudolph Bahro and Robert Havemann belonged to small opposition circles in East Berlin, but did not represent the existence of a larger opposition movement in the GDR. Other small circles of East Germans existed throughout the GDR, but with little opportunity to organize public activities without attracting the attention of the Stasi. Most church-based groups were quite small, often with no more than ten to twenty active members. The church-based groups provided a space for East Germans, particularly non-intellectuals or members of the political opposition, to meet and organize activities with the protection and support of the Evangelical Church. The groups pursued a specific issue on behalf of the church

within the community, so many of their names are preceded by the designation *AG* (*Arbeitsgruppe*—working group), *AK* (*Arbeitskreis*—working circle), or *IG* (*Initiativgruppe*—initiative group). The groups advanced social issues grounded on religious belief. Although these groups were independent of state control, their activities were subject to the approval of the church sponsor.

Leipzig's church-based groups focused on three main themes: peace, environmental protection and poverty in the third world. Leipzig's Jugendpfarramt sponsored the work of groups such as *AG Friedensdienst* (Working group in the service of peace, established 1981), *AG Umweltschutz* (Working group for environmental protection, est. 1981), and *AG Wehrdienstfragen* (Working group for military service questions, est. 1985), but many received sponsorship from a particular pastor or congregation. The Nikolaikirche supported *IG Hoffnung Nikaragua* (Initiative group hope for Nicaragua, est. 1981) and *Frauen für den Frieden* (Women for peace, est. 1984). *AK Solidarische Kirche* (Working circle for Solidarity Church, est. 1984) was based at Leipzig's theological seminary. Church-based groups also existed outside of Leipzig's center as evidenced by the peace work of *AG für Frieden Göhlis* (Working group for Peace Göhlis, est. 1985) and *Friedenskreis Grünau/Lindenau* (Peace circle Grüneau/Lindenau, est. 1983), both named after the Leipzig suburbs of their church sponsors. The latter group was an ecumenical peace group sponsored by a Catholic congregation in Leipzig. Although Leipzig's church-based groups cooperated with similar groups elsewhere in the GDR, each had been organized on the initiative of Leipzig's residents. The regional groups of Aktion Sühnezeichen, Frauen für den Frieden and AK Solidarische Kirche, though part of GDR-wide initiatives, had been organized at the local level by individuals in Leipzig.<sup>69</sup>

Several factors contributed to the development of Leipzig's church-based groups in the 1980s. By the end of the 1970s, a large number of Bausoldaten had completed their service and were looking for venues for their activism for peace.<sup>70</sup> The state's new military policies in 1979 pushed many citizens to become involved in peace work. Their creation

<sup>69</sup> For a description of each of Leipzig's groups, see Dietrich and Schwabe, *Freunde und Feinde*, 495–504.

<sup>70</sup> Bartee explains that by the late 1970s, 4,000–5,000 individuals had served as Bausoldaten in the GDR or refused military service. Having refused armed service on religious grounds (and having already faced discrimination and being accustomed to meeting for support), they sought haven in the churches. Bartee, *A Time to Speak Out*, 87.

followed a decade in which the Evangelical Church had strengthened its position and presence in the GDR and it had begun to increase its support of issues other than peace. For example, in 1979 the Kirchenbund established a center in Wittenberg to conduct environmental research and promote environmental awareness in the GDR.<sup>71</sup> The state had many reasons to be interested in the formation of church-based groups. The formation of church-based peace groups supported the state's own interest in promoting peace.<sup>72</sup> The official status of church-based groups also brought greater transparency to their activities and membership and put these groups under the moderating influence of the Evangelical Church. In this sense, local groups served the state as a sort of safety- or release-valve for social unrest.<sup>73</sup>

An examination of the formation, sponsorship, membership, and activities of AG Friedensdienst provides invaluable insight into the opportunities for peace work and the relationship between church-based groups, the church and the state at the local level.<sup>74</sup> Leipzig's Jugendpfarramt sponsored the activities of AG Friedensdienst from its formal integration into the Evangelical Church at the beginning of the decade, and with this sponsorship its activities were never limited to a single church or congregation in Leipzig. Although its membership remained small, AG Friedensdienst actively promoted peace issues throughout the decade. It also had many points of contact and cooperation with other groups in Leipzig and the GDR.

In 1980, an unofficial collaborator (IM) of the Stasi code-named "Junge" filed a report describing the substance of a meeting of the regional group of former Bausoldaten in Leipzig that had taken place in the home of Helmut Nitzsche on October 23, 1980. Nitzsche and Pastor Rudolph Albrecht from Dresden had been among the first to serve as Bausoldaten in the 1960s. Also at this meeting were Heinz Bächer, who had

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<sup>71</sup> Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition*, 449.

<sup>72</sup> M.E. Sarotte's study of the rapprochement between the FRG and GDR between 1969 and 1973 concludes that preventing war or military confrontation in Europe was one of the SED's and Moscow's primary concerns during this period. Sarotte notes that many of the SED's leaders, including Erich Honecker, were influenced by their memories of the Second World War and genuinely motivated to prevent another war, which would probably be fought on German soil. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil*, 166.

<sup>73</sup> For this view, see Mushaben, "Swords to Ploughshares," 132.

<sup>74</sup> Anja Kettler's 1999 master's thesis from the University of Münster is the only study to date to examine the work of AG Friedensdienst in any detail. Kettler, "Von der Friedensbewegung."

just completed his Bausoldat service the previous year and had moved to Leipzig to study at the theological seminary, two unnamed theology students, and an unidentified young man. IM-Junge also belonged to this regional group. IM-Junge reported that they discussed plans for the next GDR-wide gathering of former Bausoldaten in Leipzig and that Bächer was to become the new head of this regional group. IM-Junge closed his report with information about the future status of the group: "During the meeting the priorities, future tasks and plans of the regional group were discussed. The regional work of the former Bausoldaten should be set up under the auspices of Leipzig's Jugendpfarramt to at least make state measures, that is to say sanctions, against its members more difficult."<sup>75</sup> This excerpt captures a moment in this local group's transition into one of several such groups that would work for peace under the protection of the Evangelical Church in the GDR in the 1980s. The Bausoldaten sought to expand the scope of activities and to protect themselves from state power.

AG Friedensdienst's membership during the 1970s included only a handful of people in Leipzig, including Helmut Wolff, Helmut Nitzsche, Karl-August Kamilli, and Jürgen Lohmann, as well as Pastor Albrecht from Dresden. Wolff and Nitzsche had met in 1969 at the first GDR-wide Bausoldat meeting and had built a small circle that met once a month in a private apartment in Leipzig. Students, mostly from the theological seminary, sometimes attended these meetings, but the group's membership remained no larger than five or six people throughout the decade.<sup>76</sup> This regional group helped organize the GDR-wide annual Bausoldat meeting, which was held in Leipzig after 1968, and like other former Bausoldaten helped young men make the decision to become Bausoldaten. Although most of its members were active in the Evangelical Church, the group received little formal support from the church, and their activities in the 1970s remained quite limited. When they met as a group, they spoke about literature, international and domestic politics, peace issues and the military.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Heinz Bächer requested a copy of his personal Stasi file after 1989. The three binders of materials that he received include reports of activities such as this meeting, copies of letters that had been intercepted in the mail by the Stasi, and photographs that had secretly been taken of him, his girlfriend and friends. PA-HB-personal MfS File.

<sup>76</sup> Wolff, interview; Helmut Nitzsche, interview. Nitzsche's wife, Gisela, recalled that the group "was very unofficial." Gisela Nitzsche, interview by author, Leipzig, Germany, 12 November 2001.

<sup>77</sup> Wolff, interview; Helmut Nitzsche, interview; Bächer recalled that both Wolff and Nitzsche kept abreast of all of the latest military developments in the GDR and the



The activities and character of this local Bausoldaten group changed with Heinz Bächer's arrival in Leipzig in September 1979. Bächer had just completed his Bausoldat service in Prora and moved to Leipzig from Thuringia to study theology at the seminary. Bächer, who had actively encouraged young men to serve in the Bausoldat units during his own service, had met with Pastor Albrecht in Dresden to discuss the opportunities for peace work in Leipzig. Pastor Albrecht put Bächer in contact with the regional group of former Bausoldaten in Leipzig at the end of 1979. Bächer recalled with excitement the potential that he saw in this small group that had met and worked consistently for a decade in Leipzig: "For me it was like a foundation that something could develop from... I was ten years younger, a student and wanted to take more action."<sup>78</sup>

Bächer recognized that this small "house circle" in Leipzig had not been a threat to the state because after so many years it had not developed into anything bigger.<sup>79</sup> Gisela Nitzsche, whose home hosted many of these meetings, indicated that there had never been any danger in the group's work.<sup>80</sup> The public activities of former Bausoldaten, such as the GDR-wide meeting and the peace seminars that had developed first at Königswalde, took place within the protected sphere of the Evangelical Church. Before pursuing bigger initiatives, Bächer realized that the group should first be integrated directly into the church and he began searching for a church sponsor in Leipzig.<sup>81</sup> A Catholic priest became the group's first supporter and allowed the group to meet in his church in Leipzig's Lindenu suburb.<sup>82</sup> Bächer, seeking a more central location in the city, had approached the pastor of the Michaeliskirche (St. Michael's Church), located just outside of Leipzig's ring, who told him that they could not use the church without a pastor willing to become responsible for them. In the fall of 1980, Bächer began seeking sponsorship with Leipzig's Jugendpfarramt. Helmut Nitzsche explained that this was a logical sponsor for

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world. Bächer, interview. Bächer describes the work of this "house circle" in Leipzig before its connection with the Jugendpfarramt. See ABL 22.2.42. In the late 1980s, Wolff wrote a short summary of AG Friedensdienst's work in Leipzig. He describes its evolution from a regional group of Bausoldaten in Leipzig that each year had prepared the annual GDR-wide meeting of former Bausoldaten in Leipzig. Helmut Wolff, "Die Arbeitsgruppe 'Friedensdienst' in Leipzig stellt sich vor," 1987/1988, PA-HW.

<sup>78</sup> Bächer, interview.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Gisela Nitzsche, interview.

<sup>81</sup> Bächer, interview.

<sup>82</sup> Helmut Nitzsche, interview.

the group: "The Jugendpfarramt's work was with the young people, so we had better contact with the youth in the Jugendpfarramt."<sup>83</sup> Wolfgang Gröger, who had just arrived in Leipzig to be the youth pastor at the Jugendpfarramt in 1981, agreed to sponsor the group's work.<sup>84</sup> Gröger had not served with the Bausoldaten, but he had attended their peace seminar in Leipzig since 1980 and his supervisor in Dresden, Harald Bretschneider, had served with the earliest Bausoldaten units. Gröger recalled that at their 1981 meeting, the former Bausoldaten had made opening up their work and building greater public awareness of peace issues a new priority.<sup>85</sup> From 1981, the regional group of former Bausoldaten in Leipzig became based at the Jugendpfarramt and adopted the name AG Friedensdienst.<sup>86</sup>

AG Friedensdienst pursued an active peace program in Leipzig within the space provided by the Jugendpfarramt and viewed peace in very broad terms. In an information sheet outlining its goals and mission, the group explained that peace had a special meaning to them as Christians: "[Peace is] not only the condition in which weapons are silent, but rather when people and groups of different or opposing opinions, world views, religions, and races work together for the well-being of mankind. [Peace is] a process in which the humanistic basic rights become gradually realized through personal, social and political acts."<sup>87</sup> For AG Friedensdienst, the Christian perspective of peace work extended beyond just disarmament. It not only required developments in the political sphere, but also within society itself and through the work of individuals at the personal level. To pursue this mission, AG Friedensdienst outlined a multifaceted program: "We set for ourselves the following tasks in which we want to be effective as a working group: 1) the exchange of information and opinions; 2) the development and

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Gröger, interview.

<sup>85</sup> Gröger was quite familiar with the annual Bausoldaten meeting and the activities of Leipzig's group of former Bausoldaten. Ibid. During an evaluation of AG Friedensdienst's recent work in 1985, Gröger explained that he had attended the Peace Seminar in 1980. "Gedächtnisprotokoll: Treff der AG Friedensdienst 2.4.85, 19:30," 1, SLWA: 6.4, Frieden, 1983–1985.

<sup>86</sup> Some sources, even its own members, refer to this group as Arbeitskreis Friedensdienst (Working Circle in the Service of Peace) or Arbeitsgemeinschaft Frieden (Working Community Peace).

<sup>87</sup> "Der Begriff Frieden wird heute oft gebraucht..." no date, PA-HB: [unlabeled file of AGF materials]. (hereafter PA-HB: AGF materials).

editing of materials for us and for others; 3) leading evening events for the group and congregations; 4) answering questions (for example, about the Bausoldaten, pre-military training, armament, etc); 5) assisting in religious services (for example the Service for Military Conscripts, etc.); 6) leading a peace seminar (the beginning of March every year); and 7) discussing the problems of conscripts.”<sup>88</sup> AG Friedensdienst’s integration into the Jugendpfarramt made it possible for the group to pursue this extensive range of specific activities in Leipzig. Heinz Bächer explained that the group’s multifaceted mission distinguished it from the state’s own peace policies and other unilateral peace initiatives that originated within the church. AG Friedensdienst was as opposed to the stationing of SS-20 Soviet missiles in the GDR as it was to the Pershing missiles in the FRG. In May 1981, Pastor Christoph Wonneberger and other church leaders in Dresden issued an appeal for a “Social Peace Service” as a non-military alternative to service in the Bausoldaten units. Under the proposal, recruits would serve a full twenty-four months of duty, but work in the social services, such as hospitals and homes for children, the elderly or the disabled. Bächer emphasized that AG Friedensdienst discussed and fully supported this initiative, but a “Social Peace Service” represented only one of several goals.<sup>89</sup>

The Jugendpfarramt’s sponsorship also allowed AG Friedensdienst to broaden its scope of membership and contacts in Leipzig. In October 1982, Bächer submitted an article to the regional church periodical *Der Sonntag* describing AG Friedensdienst’s association with the Jugendpfarramt and the new opportunities this sponsorship made possible for the group in Leipzig: “[Before], it was difficult for the group to find good connections, i.e., contact with all the groups in the different congregations, from students to parents, from apprentices to people eligible for military service, from youth groups to Bible study circles...Therefore, we saw it as a good opportunity for us to be linked with Leipzig’s Jugendpfarramt and to work there as a group. We hoped for cooperation with colleagues there and the possibility to find a way out of our anonym-

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<sup>88</sup> Many congregations organized a special religious service for young men about to begin their military service. “Der Begriff Frieden wird heute oft gebraucht...” AGF probably produced this information sheet in the later half of 1982. It could not have been earlier since it refers to the Peace Seminar that it first organized in March 1982. Also, Heinz Bächer outlined a similar list of seven tasks in an article about AG Friedensdienst that he submitted in October 1982 to a church periodical for publication. See ABL 22.2.43, 2.

<sup>89</sup> Bächer, interview. For the *SoFd* proposal, see PA-HB: SoFd. For an English translation of the *SoFd* proposal, see Woods, *Opposition in the GDR*, 193–194.

ity.”<sup>90</sup> *Der Sonntag* did not publish this article. By 1982, AG Friedensdienst’s active membership had increased to about fourteen people. Its total membership never exceeded twenty people, but its members extended beyond its core of former Bausoldaten to include women, students outside of theology, and even non-Lutherans. Rainer-Lutz Stellmacher, a graphic arts student, and his girlfriend, Marion Pieper, became involved in Bächer’s peace work in 1980 and joined AG Friedensdienst. Bärbel (nee Schadel) Hargesheimer, a member of the Baptist church, joined AG Friedensdienst in 1982 after attending one of the groups peace events that year.<sup>91</sup> Other women active in the group included Brigitte Moritz, Irene Helmer, Evelyn Bosse, and Varena Krebs. Several church youth workers in Leipzig became active members, including Matthias Sengewald and Bernhard Weismann, and Pastor Gröger introduced many future members to the group, including Horst Gröger.<sup>92</sup> With the exception of Ernst Demele, who joined the group in 1987, most of its members had joined by 1983 and only a few left the group during the 1980s. Edgar Dusdal, a theology student in Leipzig was only an active member in 1981 and 1982, and Heinz Bächer left the group in 1985 when he finished the seminary and moved to his first church in Thuringia.<sup>93</sup> A member of the group who joined in 1983 also reported to the Stasi as IM-Fuchs.<sup>94</sup>

AG Friedensdienst had no formal structure or organization, but the founding members, most notably Helmut Wolff, Helmut Nitzsche, Heinz Bächer, and IM-Junge, directed much of the group’s work.<sup>95</sup> Through the Jugendpfarramt’s sponsorship, the group had access to many of the Evangelical Church’s buildings in Leipzig, and it met twice a month at the Jugendpfarramt in the center of town. Between seven and eight people usually attended the meetings.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Bächer wrote on the copy of this submission that Pastor Rudolph Albrecht had suggested that he write this report about AG Friedensdienst’s incorporation into the Jugendpfarramt in Leipzig. The two-page article is dated October 5, 1982. ABL 22.2.43, 2.

<sup>91</sup> Bärbel Hargesheimer (nee Schadel), interview by author, 1 November 2001, Leipzig, Germany.

<sup>92</sup> Horst Gröger, interview by author, Leipzig, Germany, 12 November 2001.

<sup>93</sup> Two active members of the group in 1982, Katja and Uwe, left the group, but none of the former members could recall their last names or what had happened to them.

<sup>94</sup> Dietrich, *Freunde und Feinde*, 553.

<sup>95</sup> Several former members of AG Friedensdienst identified these former Bausoldaten (including the IM) as the most active and leading members of the group. Hargesheimer, interview; Brigitte Moritz, interview by author, Leipzig, Germany, 6 November 2001; Ernst Demele, interview by author, Leipzig, Germany, 31 October 2001.

<sup>96</sup> Bächer, interview.

AG Friedensdienst's affiliation with the Jugendpfarramt also brought church oversight into the activities of the group. The terms of the group's relationship with the Jugendpfarramt and the Evangelical Church in Leipzig were not defined by any formal written agreement, but rather the personal terms of Pastor Gröger, who had assumed responsibility for the group's work. Pastor Gröger explained that AG Friedensdienst and the other groups based at the Jugendpfarramt could do what they wanted, but within certain limits. For publications, this meant showing Gröger drafts of the printed material before their distribution. Gröger also reviewed planned activities of the group and attended these activities. In addition to demanding approval, Gröger insisted that each of the groups sponsored by the Jugendpfarramt must follow certain guidelines. Their activities had to have a Christian dimension, they could not say anything against the Evangelical Church, and they could not be deceptive in their work. Gröger also instructed the groups to confine their activities to within the sphere of the church: "We can do what we want in the church, but not in the public. The public means banners or other actions in the streets." Gröger also explained that he did not want journalists from the West, who frequently visited Leipzig during trade fairs, to attend the group's activities. During his tenure as youth pastor in Leipzig, local authorities frequently summoned Gröger to the town hall to explain and answer for activities of AG Friedensdienst and the other groups based at the Jugendpfarramt.<sup>97</sup>

AG Friedensdienst remained active in Leipzig throughout the 1980s, but between 1981 and 1985 the group made its biggest contributions to the peace movement and the sphere of independent activity in Leipzig. During this period, AG Friedensdienst emerged from its "anonymity" as a house circle and established new areas in Leipzig where East Germans could meet to discuss peace and other social issues. The group broadened its membership and fulfilled many of its goals as a working group sponsored by the Jugendpfarramt.

AG Friedensdienst organized Leipzig's first Friedensdekade in 1981, bringing to Leipzig an event that had been initiated by the Evangelical Church in the GDR only two years earlier. In 1979, the Evangelical Church in East and West Germany had issued a joint statement to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the beginning of the Second World War. Afterwards, the head youth pastors of each of the eight Landeskirche proposed creating an annual ten-day event to continue this joint commit-

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<sup>97</sup> Gröger, interview. Bächer recalled that Gröger often had difficulties with the state because of the group's activities. Bächer, interview.

ment to peace. Harald Bretschneider, head of the Landeskirche of Saxony's youth ministry, developed the motto "Frieden schaffen ohne Waffen" ("Make Peace Without Weapons") for the first Friedensdekade. He produced bookmarks with the image of a statue that the Soviet Union had presented to the United Nations called "Swords into Ploughshares." Bretschneider's office also produced and distributed materials and suggestions to help youth pastors in each of the Landeskirche organize activities and religious services related to the theme in their local parishes during this event, which took place November 9-19, 1980.<sup>98</sup> The following year, Bretschneider transferred coordination of the Friedensdekade to the Kirchenbund. The Kirchenbund distributed a booklet with over thirty pages of suggested prayers, songs, and information about that year's theme "Gerechtigkeit, Abrüstung, Frieden" ("Justice, Disarmament, Peace"). The "Swords into Ploughshares" symbol that Bretschneider had selected for the 1980 Friedensdekade appeared on the front cover of the booklet.<sup>99</sup> Bishop Johannes Hempel, head of the Landeskirche of Saxony, sent a letter to all the pastors and youth workers in the Landeskirche encouraging them to participate in the Friedensdekade: "Following the prayer service on November 8, 1981 [marking the start of the Friedensdekade]... the Christian responsibility for peace and questions about justice, disarmament and reconciliation should be considered and discussed in evening events for youth and congregations."<sup>100</sup> The booklet of materials (including a bookmark with the theme of the Friedensdekade and the Swords into Ploughshares symbol) and Bishop Hempel's letter indicate that the Evangelical Church supported the Friedensdekade at both the Kirchenbund and the Landeskirche level.<sup>101</sup> This support from above certainly facilitated and encouraged the development of the Friedensdekade as a tradition in the GDR, but the actual success and the nature of the event was decided at the local level.

AG Friedensdienst assumed responsibility for organizing the 1981 Friedensdekade program in Leipzig. Heinz Bächer circulated a half page announcement and poster to all of the congregations encouraging partici-

<sup>98</sup> For the background of the first Friedensdekade, see Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition*, 382–383.

<sup>99</sup> A Christian youth association in the GDR prepared this and subsequent booklets for the Evangelical Church. *Gerechtigkeit, Abrüstung, Frieden: Friedensdekade der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR, 8.-18. November 1981*, PA-HB: Friedensdekade'81/82.

<sup>100</sup> One page letter from Dr. Hempel, Dresden to all pastors and youth workers, 9 October 1981, PA-HB: Friedensdekade'81/82.

<sup>101</sup> For one of the bookmarks, see SGML: ADS 13296.

pation in the Friedensdekade: "Dear Friends! The Friedensdekade takes place from November 8–18, 1981. In as many congregations as possible during this period, people should meet at the same time for prayer-for-peace services... We believe that in today's tense political situation, the prayer-for-peace service has a special meaning. We request that you not only promote it with the following poster, but also to give notice of it in the coming services."<sup>102</sup> The poster announced that a prayer-for-peace service would be held daily at 6:00 PM in the Nikolaikirche during the Friedensdekade. It also announced that the Friedensdekade would conclude with a "peace minute" at noon on November 18, followed by a youth service at 7:30 p.m. in the Nikolaikirche.<sup>103</sup> AG Friedensdienst organized the program for the Friedensdekade at the Nikolaikirche.<sup>104</sup> The Nikolaikirche had a central location in Leipzig. In contrast to the Thomaskirche, whose congregation and pastors placed a great emphasis on that building's classical musical heritage (Johanne Sebastian Bach's grave is on the floor before the altar), was more open to non-traditional types of activities. Several former members of AG Friedensdienst explained that they never even considered having events in the Thomaskirche because of its conservatism. As Gisela Nitzsche described, "The Thomaskirche is not a political church, it is a musical church." After holding a council meeting, the elders of Nikolaikirche granted AG Friedensdienst permission to use the church during the Friedensdekade.<sup>105</sup> Bächer explained that because of its central location, the Nikolaikirche had a "supra-regional" function and often hosted events for all of Leipzig.<sup>106</sup>

AG Friedensdienst, primarily Heinz Bächer, along with Rainer-Lutz Stellmacher and Marion Pieper, organized and led prayer-for-peace services at the Nikolaikirche during each night of the Friedensdekade. The prayer-for-peace services followed a simple format. They began with a song or music piece, followed by a greeting. The group then addressed a specific issue related to the theme of the Friedensdekade. At one service during this first Friedensdekade they advocated against children playing with military-themed toys, while at another service they provided information about the overkill capacity of atomic weapons. After a moment of silent reflection, the group led the participants through a series of prayers

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<sup>102</sup> ABL 22.2.13.

<sup>103</sup> Stellmacher, a graphic arts student, produced the posters. For a copy see ABL 22.27.14.

<sup>104</sup> Bächer, interview.

<sup>105</sup> Gisela Nitzsche, interview.

<sup>106</sup> Bächer, interview.

and then concluded the service with a song.<sup>107</sup> Pastor Gröger, who was present each night, recalled that the prayer-for-peace services were very improvised, and that only a handful of people attended.<sup>108</sup> Bächer also described the small size of these first prayer-for-peace services: “On one evening there were ten people, then five people another night, and then twenty, never much more. But the ten days were the first time that we were in the Nikolaikirche every evening for a prayer service.”<sup>109</sup>

Attendance at the youth service on the final day of the Friedensdekade greatly exceeded that of the prayer-for-peace services. Pastor Gröger gave the sermon at this service, while Bächer and Stellmacher assisted by leading the prayers. One report produced by an unidentified state official present estimated that about 800 people gathered at the Nikolaikirche for the service. The author of this report also noted that an information stand about the situation in Poland had been set up in the church. Though nobody in Leipzig knew that Polish General Wojciech Jaruzelski would declare martial law in Poland and crackdown on the Solidarity movement only a few weeks later, the situation in the GDR’s neighbor had become quite tense. People attending this service in Leipzig could add their names to an address list if they wanted to participate in a “packet action” to assist the Poles.<sup>110</sup> Bächer and Stellmacher lead the prayers during the service and included a prayer for help “that Poland can find its own political solution without foreign intervention.”<sup>111</sup> On December 13, General Jaruzelski declared martial law in Poland. The independent Solidarity trade union was banned and thousands of its members were arrested. In December 1981, the Jugendpfarramt sent a letter and the address of an individual or church office in Poland to each person who had signed up for the “packet action” during the Friedensdekade. Each participant was to send a packet to the address, and the Jugendpfarramt also provided an information sheet with suggested types of food, clothing or other materials that should be included in the package, as well as customs and postal information for sending it.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>107</sup> For the text of their script during the Friedensdekade, see ABL 22.2.3–17.

<sup>108</sup> Gröger, interview.

<sup>109</sup> Bächer, interview.

<sup>110</sup> The report was issued by the Deputy Chairperson of the District Council for internal affairs and is dated November 23, 1981. Dietrich, *Freunde und Feinde*, 45–46.

<sup>111</sup> The prayer for Poland was one of several specific prayers that Bächer and Stellmacher made during the service. For the full text of their prayers, see ABL 22.2.12.

<sup>112</sup> The total number of packets sent to Poland is unknown. The letter explained that many of the addresses in Poland were Church offices, because it was difficult to get specific



In preparation for the 1982 Friedensdekade, scheduled for November 7–17, AG Friedensdienst made an effort to broaden the event's impact in Leipzig. Several months earlier, the group invited other church-based groups in Leipzig to take part in the Friedensdekade activities at the Nikolaikirche, and encouraged other congregations to organize their own activities for the Friedensdekade. In June AG Friedensdienst sent a letter to each congregation in Leipzig and offered its assistance to any congregation or group interested in organizing their own Friedensdekade activities. They also announced that the prayer-for-peace services would be held again every evening at 6:00 p.m. in the Nikolaikirche during the Friedensdekade for anyone whose congregations did not have activities for the event.<sup>113</sup>

AG Friedensdienst and the Jugendpfarramt, explaining their hope "to shift consciousness in church congregations through the Friedensdekade," issued another circular to Leipzig's congregations in September announcing that a preparation day had been set up on October 9 for any groups interested in participating in the Friedensdekade. The circular also explained that AG Friedensdienst had organized a series of six themes that its members would be willing to discuss at local congregations before or during the Friedensdekade. Five of the themes reflected AG Friedensdienst's focus on peace, such as "Peace: Through Armament?" and "Peace: Through Pacifism." AG Umweltschutz, the environmental group sponsored by the Jugendpfarramt, had also become involved in the preparations for the Friedensdekade and its members offered to speak on the theme "Peace: Through Planting Trees?"<sup>114</sup> Through this initiative, AG Friedensdienst coordinated as many as thirty different thematic evenings in Leipzig's congregations before and during the 1982 Friedensdekade.<sup>115</sup> These evenings provided an additional forum for the group to advance its

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addresses of people in need. It explained that the churches would then distribute the packets. ABL 22.7.20.

<sup>113</sup> This letter was signed by Edgar Dusdal, Heinz Bächer and Bernhard Weismann. SLWA: 9.3.2, Jugendpfarramt (JPA), Vervielfältigungen (VVF), 1979–1988.

<sup>114</sup> ABL 22.7.24. Bächer also refers to five thematic evenings that AG Friedensdienst organized for the Friedensdekade in his rejected article submission. ABL 22.2.42, 1.

<sup>115</sup> Gröger indicated this figure in his 1982 Friedensdekade report. Kaufmann et al, *Sorget nicht*, 183. Stellmacher was questioned by the Stasi on October 20, 1982. Afterwards, he wrote an account of the questioning. The Stasi had asked him whether there was strong interest in this kind of event and Stellmacher had replied that the interest was "relatively strong." Rainer-Lutz Stellmacher, "Gespräch mit zwei Mitarbeiter der MfS am 20.10.82," ABL 22.7.28.

work in Leipzig. In one program presented at several congregations, members of AG Friedensdienst performed a short skit set at a family dinner table in which a young man tells his parents and sister that he has decided to serve with the Bausoldaten. He faces stiff resistance from his father who argues that the son is not considering the impact that this decision will have on his sister's education or his father's career. The son presents his reasons for refusing armed military service, providing the audience members with the argument for this alternative.<sup>116</sup> In another evening program, AG Friedensdienst circulated a paper with ten statements and asked the audience to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each. Hand written notes on one group leader's paper have preserved the responses of a session attended by fifteen people. In response to the statement "The church should not engage in political matters," thirteen people disagreed and two were undecided. Eleven people disagreed with the statement: "As Christians we represent the peace policies of our state" and fifteen people agreed with "I am prepared to live without the protection of weapons."<sup>117</sup> The date and location of this session are unknown and this small, unrepresentative sample reveals little about the views of East Germans outside of this session. These statements, however, show that through these evenings, AG Friedensdienst provoked discussions with an audience beyond its membership about the church's role in politics and the peace movement, the state's peace policies, and the role of Christians to promote peace.

The Evangelical Church provided support, including posters and suggested prayers, songs and other texts related to the theme "Angst, Vertrauen, Frieden" ("Fear, Faith, Peace") for the 1982 Friedensdekade.<sup>118</sup> In September 1982, the Landeskirche of Saxony sent a letter to each of its superintendents, pastors, and youth workers explaining that the Evangelical Church had certified the use of the Swords into Ploughshares symbol during the 1982 Friedensdekade. This symbol had been introduced at the first two Friedensdekades, but had been adopted as a sign of protest by young people. For a time, the state had forbidden the use of the symbol and many people had been arrested for continuing to wear it. The church,

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<sup>116</sup> ABL 22.2.47–50.

<sup>117</sup> ABL 22.2.53.

<sup>118</sup> *Angst, Vertrauen, Frieden: Friedensdekade der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR, 7.-17. November 1982*, PA-HB: Friedensdekade'81/82. The Kirchenbund promoted the 1982 Friedensdekade with a poster depicting the Swords into Ploughshares statue, SGML: file unnamed [hereafter posters].

however, explained that this symbol should only be used in reference to the Friedensdekade and that it should only be used within the space of the church during the time frame of the Friedensdekade.<sup>119</sup> Leipzig's Jugendpfarramt apparently received news of the official approval of the symbol too late. Stellmacher, a member of AG Friedensdienst and a graphic arts student, had already developed a poster without the Swords into Ploughshares symbol.<sup>120</sup> In the letter accompanying the poster that it sent to each congregation in Leipzig in October, Pastor Gröger explained that the Jugendpfarramt supported the use of the Swords to Ploughshares symbol for the Friedensdekade and that the symbol would be used within the Nikolaikirche during the Friedensdekade.<sup>121</sup>

A variety of groups, including AG Umweltschutz and Aktion Sühnezeichen, as well as church youth groups and the workers at the Jugendpfarramt organized and led prayer-for-peace services for each evening of the 1982 Friedensdekade. Approximately one hundred people attended the prayer-for-peace services, which were held in the choir room of the Nikolaikirche.<sup>122</sup> As the pastor responsible for each group's presentation at the Friedensdekade, Pastor Gröger took steps to ensure that the Jugendpfarramt had oversight for each group's prayer-for-peace service. In an October 28 letter, he outlined an order of service that each group should follow in their prayer-for-peace service. Gröger also asked each group to submit a copy of their text to the Jugendpfarramt several days before the start of the Friedensdekade and asked that a representative of each group attend a final meeting with this text on November 5, six days before the Friedensdekade would begin.<sup>123</sup>

The prayer-for-peace services represented an opportunity for AG Friedensdienst and the other groups to share their work with a larger audience in Leipzig. Gröger's October 28 letter had explained that each group

<sup>119</sup> Letter from Landeskirche office, Dresden, to all superintendents, parish offices, district youth deacons and members of the regional synod, 17 September 1982, PA-HB: Friedensdekade '81/82.

<sup>120</sup> Gröger indicated the later receipt of this news in his official report on the Jugendpfarramt's involvement in the Friedensdekade to the two superintendents in Leipzig and the Landeskirche youth pastor in Dresden. For the full text of his report dated 10 December 1982 see Kaufmann, *Sorget nicht*, 183.

<sup>121</sup> Bernhard Weismann, Gröger's Jugendwart, also signed the letter. Letter from Jugendpfarramt to all congregations in Leipzig, 22 October 1982, SLWA: 9.3.2, JPA, VVF, 1979–1988.

<sup>122</sup> Kaufmann, *Sorget nicht*, 181–182.

<sup>123</sup> Letter from Gröger and Jugendpfarramt to groups leading a prayer-for-peace service during the 1982 Friedensdekade, 28 October 1982, PA-HB: Friedensdekade '81/82.

should take no more than ten minutes to identify itself and explain what it wanted to achieve through its engagement with peace.<sup>124</sup> During AG Friedensdienst's service, Heinz Bächer used his opening greeting to explain that AG Friedensdienst was a part of the Jugendpfarramt and that its members met once or twice a month to discuss peace issues. He went on to identify the specific tasks that the group had outlined as its mission in Leipzig.<sup>125</sup>

In addition to the broader participation in the prayer-for-peace services, new activities were introduced during the 1982 Friedensdekade in Leipzig. These included a lecture organized by AG Umweltschutz entitled "Environmental Protection and Disarmament," an event for mothers with children called the "peace afternoon," and a service in the Thomaskirche commemorating the 44<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Kristallnacht*. Pastor Gröger estimated that 1,500 people, both Christians and non-Christians attended the closing service, including the head of the Landeskirche of Saxony, Bishop Hempel.<sup>126</sup>

The 1982 Friedensdekade demonstrated how events initiated by the Evangelical Church could provide a space at the local level where groups could share their work with larger community. AG Friedensdienst had established the tradition of prayer-for-peace services for each evening of the ten-day event, and it helped other groups active in Leipzig become a part of this tradition. Other churches in Leipzig organized prayer-for-peace services in later Friedensdekades and they had also become popular in churches in other cities.<sup>127</sup> Until 1986, none of the booklets distributed by the Kirchenbund with materials and suggestions for the Friedensdekade mentioned the prayer-for-peace service. That year's booklet explained: "The daily prayer-for-peace services have become an established part of the Friedensdekade in many congregations and for many groups. Many places have constructed their own format... This is fine. The following suggestions should therefore not replace developed and proven formats. Rather they should render assistance to those who are in search of materials and suggestions." This booklet then presented a model order of service (a greeting, song, Bible reading, silent reflection, song, prayer

<sup>124</sup> Letter from Gröger, 28 October 1982, PA-HB: Friedensdekade '81/82.

<sup>125</sup> For the handwritten text of Bächer's greeting, see PA-HB: Friedensdekade '81/82.

<sup>126</sup> For the text of Gröger's report, dated December 10, see Kaufmann, *Sorget nicht*, 181–183. Stasi reports estimated that approximately 1,800 people attended this service. See Dietrich, *Freunde und Feinde*, 66.

<sup>127</sup> *Kontakte* announced that several other churches would have them for the 1984 Friedensdekade. *Kontakte* (November–December 1984): 1.

petitions, the Lord's Prayer, Kyrie or other song, and concluding with a peace greeting) and suggested prayers and themes for a prayer-for-peace service for each day of the 1986 Friedensdekade.<sup>128</sup> These booklets indicate that the Kirchenbund actively promoted and encouraged the development of the annual Friedensdekade and eventually incorporated the prayer-for-peace service into this tradition.

The annual Friedensdekade continued to provide an opportunity for AG Friedensdienst and other church-based groups in Leipzig to promote their concerns under the protection of the church, and new activities gradually became an important part of this event in Leipzig. In 1984, AG Friedensdienst and other groups introduced an "Evening for Peace" from 6:00 p.m. to midnight. During that event, people gathered at the Michaeliskirche just outside of Leipzig's ring for an exhibition, singing, two films, discussion, prayer and to help put together care packets for the third world. AG Umweltschutz organized other events that year including a "Green Evening" and several lectures on environmental protection.<sup>129</sup> AG Friedensdienst, leading the first prayer-for-peace service of the 1984 Friedensdekade, announced a plan to send aid packages to Ethiopia and elsewhere in the third world. At least 130 packages, as well as money for shipping, were organized during the Friedensdekade.<sup>130</sup> On February 14, 1985, Heinz Bächer and Horst Grüger announced on behalf of AG Friedensdienst that twenty of the packages had been received by a doctor in Ethiopia and that he was expecting an additional 100. It also indicated that twelve packages had been sent to Mother Theresa and that the left-over financial contributions for shipping expenses (625 marks) had been given to Bread for the World.<sup>131</sup> The "Evening for Peace" became a regular part of the Friedensdekade in the following years, and Leipzig's groups organized different segments of each year's event. New activities introduced in 1985 included a "Peace Café" and a "Peace Library," both open every evening of the Friedensdekade from 5:00–8:00 p.m. in rooms at the

<sup>128</sup> *Friede sei mit euch: Arbeitsmaterial zur Friedensdekade der evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR 9.-19. November 1986*, 23-26, ABL 4.21.21. The 1987 booklet contained similar suggestions. *Miteinander Leben: Friedensdekade der evangelischer Kirchen der DDR 8.11-18.11 1987*, 34-40, SLWA: 6.4, Frieden, 1986–1990.

<sup>129</sup> For the list of events at the 1984 Friedensdekade, see the invitation that the Jugendpfarramt distributed on May 24, 1984. SLWA: 9.3.2, JPA-VVF-1979–1988. *Kontakte* also published the full program for the Friedensdekade. "Leben gegen den Tod"—Friedensdekade 1984—11–21. November," *Kontakte*, (November/December 1984): 1, ABL.

<sup>130</sup> "Friedensgebet (11.11.84)," PA-HB: AGF Materials.

<sup>131</sup> PA-HB: AGF Materials.

Nikolaikirche. These daily opportunities provided a place where people could come to meet the members of Leipzig's groups and to gather information about their work. That year the Nikolaikirche also hosted an exhibition related to the main theme of the Friedensdekade "Peace Develops From Justice."<sup>132</sup> In addition to the Nikolaikirche, the Lukaskirche outside of Leipzig's center organized many activities for the 1985 Friedensdekade. Pastor Christoph Wonneberger, who transferred to Leipzig from Dresden that year, organized a fast, daily prayer services, and an exhibition in his new church.<sup>133</sup>

By establishing and organizing the annual Friedensdekade, the Kirchenbund constructed a new space in East German society where groups could meet under the rubric of peace to promote their concerns on social issues such as peace and the environment with their fellow citizens. Though the Friedensdekade had been introduced by the church in both Germanys, Heinz Bächer explained its special significance in the GDR, "It was seized much more in East Germany. It was politically relevant. I think it was a small sort of an assembly point for the opposition."<sup>134</sup> In addition to the prayer-for-peace services, the new activities introduced by AG Friedensdienst in subsequent years during the Friedensdekade established the Nikolaikirche as a center for peace activities in Leipzig.

One of the most important outcomes of the Friedensdekade in Leipzig was the introduction of weekly prayer-for-peace services every Monday at 5:00 p.m. at the Nikolaikirche beginning September 13, 1982. Bächer recalled discussing the importance of extending this component of the Friedensdekade in Leipzig to the rest of the year: "Not only the ten days, but to continually do it. We thought about carrying it on one day each week, and this Monday service came into being."<sup>135</sup> Services during the Friedensdekade had been held at 6:00 p.m., but the church officials at the Nikolaikirche felt that was too late in the day.<sup>136</sup> The choice of Monday

<sup>132</sup> "Friedensdekade '85 in Leipzig," SLWA: 9.3.2, JPA, VVF, 1979-1988. *Kontakte* publicized this complete schedule. *Kontakte* (October 1985): 2, ABL.

<sup>133</sup> "Friedensdekade 85, 10.-20. November Lukaskirche," 1, ABL 11.5.5.

<sup>134</sup> Bächer, interview.

<sup>135</sup> Bächer identified Hans-Joachim Döring, a deacon at the Thomaskirche, as the person who had first suggested the idea of a weekly prayer-for-peace service. Ibid. Gröger was less specific, but had a similar recollection "the people in the Jugendpfarramt thought that ten days of the Friedensdekade was too little." Gröger, interview. There is little documentation of the first weekly prayer-for-peace services. Dietrich and Schwabe identified the first date as September 13, 1982. Dietrich, *Freunde und Feinde*, 510.

<sup>136</sup> Gröger, interview.

had no symbolic importance. It was simply the day of the week when there were the fewest activities at the Nikolaikirche.<sup>137</sup> Except for starting an hour earlier, the weekly prayer-for-peace services followed the same format as the services that had been conducted during the Friedensdekade. Each service was about thirty to forty-five minutes in length and a different group in Leipzig took on the responsibility of preparing each week's service. Until 1988, attendance rarely exceeded one hundred people. The weekly prayer-for-peace services continued the work of the Friedensdekade throughout the year and provided AG Friedensdienst and the other groups with a weekly forum to meet with the larger public and examine issues within the protected space of the Evangelical Church.

AG Friedensdienst also introduced and organized an annual peace seminar in Leipzig from 1982 to 1985. The history of this peace seminar is connected to the peace seminar and annual gathering of former Bausoldaten held in Leipzig since 1969. Helmut Nitzsche and Helmut Wolff, as members of Leipzig's small former Bausoldaten circle that had preceded AG Friedensdienst, had helped organize this annual gathering and peace seminar. Following the integration of this circle into the Jugendpfarramt, AG Friedensdienst continued the organization of this event. In the past, this peace seminar had only been for former Bausoldaten and at the beginning of the 1980s, when Bächer first attended it, only twenty to thirty former Bausoldaten participated in the seminar. AG Friedensdienst's goal was to open up this peace seminar to everyone.<sup>138</sup> Former Bausoldaten had already extended the peace seminar to non-Bausoldaten in Königswalde with great success. With this goal in mind, AG Friedensdienst's first peace seminar in March 1982 signaled a departure from the earlier peace seminars in Leipzig.

AG Friedensdienst adopted a peace seminar format similar to other regional peace seminars and the group began promoting it within the Evangelical Church several weeks in advance. In an internal church circular, AG Friedensdienst announced that the Peace Seminar would be held on March 6 and 7 at the Michaeliskirche, located just outside of Leipzig's ring. The invitation explained that the peace seminar would begin on a Saturday morning. The main activities included a lecture by a physicist from Potsdam scheduled to speak on the theme "What makes us secure?" followed by small group discussion on this theme in the church's meeting rooms from 9:30 to 5:00. The day concluded with a religious service in

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<sup>137</sup> Bächer, interview.

<sup>138</sup> Bächer, interview.

the Michaeliskirche at 7:00 p.m. and the peace seminar concluded Sunday morning with an opportunity for participants to meet informally to exchange information and questions.<sup>139</sup>

AG Friedensdienst further promoted the Saturday evening service with sixty to seventy posters that were hung in church showcases and notice boards throughout Leipzig. Many of these church notice boards were located outside and therefore accessible to the general public. Although Rainer-Lutz Stellmacher, the art student who designed and produced these posters, was already an active member of AG Friedensdienst, the Jugendpfarramt formally commissioned him to develop these posters. Reflecting the close proximity between the state's peace efforts and the independent peace movement in the GDR, Stellmacher had already been working on a poster for a peace poster competition in East Berlin since December 1981. Stellmacher's submission contained a photomontage related to the title that he had selected for his project: "What makes us secure?" During a planning meeting for the peace seminar in February, AG Friedensdienst, having already adopted his poster title as the theme of the peace seminar, decided to use Stellmacher's poster to popularize the Saturday evening service. Stellmacher's professor in Leipzig, aware that this poster was for both a poster competition and a commission by the Jugendpfarramt, provided Stellmacher with technical advice as well as access to the school's materials and equipment to complete the project. The Stasi questioned Stellmacher about these posters after the 1982 peace seminar. During the interrogation, he explained the background to the poster, how it was produced, and his membership in AG Friedensdienst. The poster competition had been sponsored by an art school in East Berlin and submissions were to be connected to the theme "For World Peace." The winning poster was to be displayed in East Berlin's U-bahn.<sup>140</sup> Bäcker, also interrogated by the Stasi afterwards, recalled that Stellmacher had produced good quality posters (sixty to seventy copies) and that they had been only displayed on church signboards.<sup>141</sup>

AG Friedensdienst efforts at opening up the Bausoldaten peace seminar to larger audience were successful. An estimated 120 people attended the peace seminars activities during the day on Saturday and over 1,200 people attended the service at the Michaeliskirche that evening. Forty-four

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<sup>139</sup> PA-HB: AGF materials.

<sup>140</sup> See ABL 22.7.21–22, ABL 22.7.27, and ABL 22.2.33–37.

<sup>141</sup> Bäcker, interview. Stellmacher's notes indicate the number he produced. See ABL 22.27.43.



people met for the final gathering of the peace seminar on Sunday morning.<sup>142</sup> Many of the participants had traveled to Leipzig from other towns and cities in the GDR.<sup>143</sup> AG Friedensdienst planned for people from elsewhere in the GDR to participate. In its announcement of the event, interested parties were instructed to RSVP their attendance to Bächer and to indicate whether they needed accommodation.<sup>144</sup> In addition to the lecture and small group discussion, many of which discussed the “social peace service” initiative as an alternative to armed military service, an information wall at the church also provided news and information about peace issues or events in Leipzig and other cities.<sup>145</sup> As with the Friedensdekade, all activities of the peace seminar took place inside of the church.

The Saturday evening service led by AG Friedensdienst had the highest attendance of the weekend’s activities and also received the most attention by the local authorities in the following weeks. This service in the Michaeliskirche incorporated many elements of the prayer-for-peace service into the traditional Lutheran order of worship. As a traditional service, it included a liturgy, a sermon, the Lord’s Prayer, a collection, and Holy Communion, but a band led the service’s music program, including the singing of ‘We Shall Overcome’ at the end of the service. The guest lecturer gave a presentation on weapons systems, and four members of AG Friedensdienst presented their personal response to “What makes us secure?” in their own lives. Pastor Gröger and a deacon from the Jugendpfarramt participated, but nine members of AG Friedensdienst led most of the service, including Heinz Bächer who gave the sermon.<sup>146</sup> A day or two before the peace seminar began, Bächer had presented this sermon to members of AG Friedensdienst and had incorporated their suggestions into his final version. Pastor Gröger had also read it and approved it beforehand.<sup>147</sup> Midway through the sermon, Bächer asked: “Are there opportunities for us to make peace without weapons? Yes there are. They are small steps and most of them are completely personal decisions that we must make. Our courage increases by making these decisions, and we

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<sup>142</sup> ABL 12.1.9. Bächer’s personal Stasi file indicates that IM-Junge had reported the attendance figures to his superiors. PA–HB: MfS file. Bächer confirmed their accuracy. Bächer, interview.

<sup>143</sup> ABL 12.1.9.

<sup>144</sup> PA–HB: AGF materials.

<sup>145</sup> ABL 12.1.9. Bächer, interview.

<sup>146</sup> For an outline of the service, identifying each segment, its estimated length, and who led that part of the service see PA–HB: AGF materials.

<sup>147</sup> Bächer, interview.

find that we are not alone. The seminar and the service today again show us this.” Bächer then went on to address the importance of asserting a position for peace with a simple “Yes” and “No.” He explained: “For me this means: ‘No’ to security through weapons, ‘No’ to promoting hate and making enemies instead of love and friends. This means, for a whole generation of young people, ‘No’ to weapons training and ‘No’ to armed service [and instead] ‘Yes’ to peace education, international understanding and disarmament. ‘Yes’ to alternatives that are opposed to the arms race, such as the foundation of a social peace service in the GDR.”<sup>148</sup> Bächer recognized that social change began with small steps at the personal level. At this service, the pulpit provided him with an opportunity to share with a larger audience many of the values that had shaped his own personal decisions in life and to speak out against armed military service and militarization of society in the GDR.

The content of Bächer’s sermon triggered an aggressive response from the state authorities in Leipzig and tested the Evangelical Church’s willingness and ability to protect groups that it sponsored. Already in February 1982, a month before the peace seminar and Bächer’s sermon, IM-Junge had reported to his superiors that a political division existed between the older and younger members of AG Friedensdienst: “On one side stands [Pastor] Gröger, Helmut Nitzsche and the IM [Junge] whose activities are upright...on the other side, Heinz Bächer has built a radical oppositional circle which [Rainer-Lutz] Stellmacher and [Edgar] Dusdal belong to.” IM-Junge went on to describe how Stellmacher supplied the group with materials and posters.<sup>149</sup> Dusdal had driven to Potsdam with Bächer to arrange the guest lecturer for the peace seminar.<sup>150</sup>

On April 5, the Stasi questioned Bächer and Stellmacher about the sermon and production of posters for the peace seminar. Afterwards, Bächer and Stellmacher produced detailed written accounts of their interrogations and submitted copies to the Jugendpfarramt in Leipzig. Bächer’s account records the dialogue of the two hour and fifteen minute session with the Stasi and conveys his effort to use the protective cover of the Jugendpfarramt to strengthen his position during the interrogation. In response to the first question, a request for an explanation of his sermon, Bächer replied: “This service took place under the direction of the Jugendpfarramt in Leipzig and also under its responsibility. Everything

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<sup>148</sup> For the full text of this sermon see ABL 22.2.18.

<sup>149</sup> PA-HB; MfS file.

<sup>150</sup> Bächer, interview.

was approved by Youth Pastor Gröger. Therefore, I would not like to make any statements about this service without Pastor Gröger.” The interrogating officer pressed Bächer to discuss his sermon and AG Friedensdienst, but Bächer continued to defend his work by using the protective cover of the church. He emphasized that Pastor Gröger had read and approved his sermon before hand. When asked to identify the other members of AG Friedensdienst, he refused to answer, arguing that the group was an internal church matter. When asked where he had met Stellmacher, Bächer replied that they had met within the church. Regarding the peace seminar, he explained that “AG Friedensdienst of the Jugendpfarramt” had organized this event. The interrogating officer accused Bächer of demanding the disarmament of the Warsaw Pact, demanding that young people refuse military service and arguing that Social Peace Service was the only alternative to armed service. The officer argued that because of these statements it could not even be considered a sermon. Bächer disagreed with the characterization of his statements and argued that he believed that he had preached the word of God.<sup>151</sup> Bächer recalled that the Stasi told him that he would face criminal proceedings and two to five years in prison for what he had said in his sermon.<sup>152</sup>

Leipzig’s church leaders immediately intervened on behalf of Bächer and Stellmacher. The day after their interrogations, Pastor Gröger, Superintendent Magirius and Superintendent Richter met with local representatives of the Secretariat for Church Questions in Leipzig. Magirius, protesting the Stasi’s right to interrogate Bächer and Stellmacher, argued “If you do it at all, then you must consult us... It is an absurdity to prosecute people who work in our commission.” Richter explained the protection offered by the church, “Following church rules, the pastor always has the responsibility for a sermon, even if the person who delivers the sermon is not yet ordained. This responsibility Gröger had taken in full... We must view these general tendencies toward instigation with worry.” The representatives of the church secretariat expressed their concern over the wording of Bächer’s sermon and explained that they had little influence on the security organs who had conducted the interrogations.<sup>153</sup> Immediately

<sup>151</sup> “Nachschrift eines Gesprächs von Stud. Theol. Heinz Bächer am 5.4.1982 beim MfS,” ABL 22.2.33–37. Stellmacher’s account is not in the format of a dialogue. See “Aufzeichnung des Gesprächs am 5.4.82 mit einem Mitarbeiter des MfS, soweit mir erinnerlich,” SLWA: 6.4, Frieden, 1981–1982.

<sup>152</sup> Bächer, interview.

<sup>153</sup> Kaufmann, *Sorget nicht*, 171.

after this meeting, Richter sent a copy of Bächer's sermon and a transcript of the discussion with the church secretariat to the Landeskirche office in Dresden.<sup>154</sup> The Landeskirche, having no objections with the wording of Bächer's sermon, took that matter up with the authorities in Leipzig and neither Bächer or Stellmacher were prosecuted.<sup>155</sup> Through his contact with Harald Bretschneider and Rudolph Albrecht, Bächer had strong personal support from the Landeskirche. However, Bächer explained that the church's support of his March 6 sermon was not based on personal contact, but rather the church's recognition that he had given a sermon, a genuine theological presentation given in the name of the church and with the approval of church leaders. A freedom of the church was at stake.<sup>156</sup>

AG Friedensdienst's peace seminar, like the Friedensdekade, represented an annual opportunity for the group to share its work and promote peace within East Germany society. Just as the group had evolved from a small house circle of former Bausoldaten into a church-based group with a broader membership, AG Friedensdienst transformed the annual Bausoldaten seminar in Leipzig into an event open to everyone in the community and elsewhere in the GDR. The success of the first peace seminar in 1982 continued much of the work of the 1981 Friedensdekade in Leipzig. As one of its main outreach activities, AG Friedensdienst continued to organize the peace seminars every March in Leipzig until 1985. The format of the peace seminars that followed remained identical to the 1982 seminar and attendance varied from sixty to 120 participants in the following years. The peace seminar again demonstrated the importance of the Evangelical Church's support. As the response of Leipzig's youth pastor and church superintendents to Bächer's interrogation by the police after the 1982 peace seminar demonstrated, church-sponsored activists could count on the active and effective support of their initiatives by the church, even when they ran counter to the state's views. Without this support, AG Friedensdienst and its annual peace seminar could not survive the state's prosecution of its activities. Without the church support, even the small steps toward social change that Bächer described in his sermon would not be possible.

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<sup>154</sup> The packet of information is dated April 6, 1982. SLWA: 6.4, Frieden, 1981–1982.

<sup>155</sup> The Landeskirche's letter to Richter, dated June 1, was quite brief and indicated that the case in support of Bächer's sermon had been taken up with Leipzig's town council on May 24. SLWA: 6.4, Frieden, 1981–1982.

<sup>156</sup> Bächer, interview.

## Summary

With the exception of the Czechoslovak state's labeling the Methodius commemoration as a "peace rally," the issue of peace was largely absent from the interests of Slovak activists. Secret church activists instead emphasized broad demands for religious freedom that ranged from the right to a papal visit and to appoint bishops without state approval to freedom to worship. These demands reflected the specific situation of believers in Slovakia, whose church had been repressed in the 1950s and freedom to worship and develop spiritually had been taken into the underground with the formation of the secret church. East German activists, while certainly hoping for greater freedom from the state and demanding an end to the *Jugendweihe*, unlike their Slovak counterparts, had institutional support and their efforts could be redirected to specific interests such as peace and the environment. Moreover, the focus on peace in the GDR reflects the special situation of the GDR within the Soviet bloc. The Cold War division of the world ran right through the heart of the two Germanys in the form of the Berlin Wall. While each Soviet bloc country pursued peace by building (and defending) socialism, East and West Germany represented the anticipated front lines of a future military confrontation, made more apparent by the desire of both superpowers to station short range nuclear missiles on German soil in the late 1970s.

Kazimierz Wóycicki, a member of the Committee for the Defense of Workers (KOR) and later Solidarity, explained how the high attendance during Pope John Paul II's first visit to Poland in 1979 had strengthened the political opposition in Poland, and, in particular, his perspective to the potential power of society against the state: "It was the first time we could see the masses. It was very important. The whole opposition in Poland in the 1970s [was no more than a thousand people.] In 1979, well, one day, Monday we see one million people, Tuesday one and a half million, Friday three million. And we are together and it is all peaceful. And even the policemen seem to be on our side. So it was a tremendous impact of course, psychologically, on the whole development [of Solidarity.] *Wojtyła* of course is one of the very important [factors.]"<sup>157</sup> In Poland, religious symbols, such as the Black Madonna of Częstochowa, had already helped mobilize the Polish population against the party-state for almost three decades in Poland before the Velehrad pilgrimage in Czechoslovakia and the first *Friedensdekade* in Leipzig. In 1956 Stefan Cardinal Wyszyń-

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<sup>157</sup> Kazimierz Wóycicki, interview by author, Leipzig, Germany, 29 October 2001.

ski (who led the Catholic Church in Poland as primate from 1948 to his death in 1981) had announced a nine-year program of spiritual renewal and celebration called the Great Novena in preparation for the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christianity in Poland in 1966.<sup>158</sup> During the Great Novena, a copy of the Black Madonna icon was taken to each diocese where it was circulated among the different parishes and was even given to local households for short periods of time. As Jan Kubik has argued, these visitations strengthened the social unity and religiosity of Catholics at the local level. During the celebrations in 1966, church and state offered competing discourses on the significance of the millennium. While the church emphasized the close relationship between the Polish nation and Christianity and submission to the Virgin Mary, the state presented the Polish People's Republic as the final stage of a long historical process in the building of socialism.<sup>159</sup> Thus, the Great Novena not only strengthened Catholicism in Poland, but also offered an alternative view of the Polish nation that emphasized the centrality of its Christian tradition. Maryjane Osa addresses the popular component of the Great Novena celebrations:

The significant aspect of the Great Novena as a pastoral *mobilization* [italics Osa's] was that it involved local actions across the entire country. Every tiny village had a church... Ordinary people were drawn into conflict with the authorities in defense of their local parishes. Although the guidelines were set by the episcopate, local parish councils and church clubs shaped the recommendations to suit their conditions... Thus, the Great Novena generated enormous social capital through autonomous organization, solidarity built through repeated sparring with the authorities, and a highly resonant, symbolic discourse. Although conceived as a program of religious renewal, the Great Novena of the Millenium provided, for millions, ongoing training in social movement methods and consciousness.<sup>160</sup>

Both Kubik and Osa highlight the impact of this religious celebration on ordinary people and at the local level.

Pope John Paul II's June 1979 visit to Poland represented a similar challenge to the state's monopoly on power. In Warsaw's Victory Square on June 2, John Paul II spoke freely about the historically close relationship between Christianity and the Polish nation, the failed Warsaw upris-

<sup>158</sup> In 966, King Mieszko I had been baptized and the first bishopric had been established in Poland. In 1000 a formal church hierarchy was founded with the first Archbishopric in Gniezno and bishoprics were established soon after in Kraków, Wrocław and Kolberg. Davies, *God's Playground*, 67–70.

<sup>159</sup> Kubik, *The Power of Symbols*, 110–117.

<sup>160</sup> Osa, *Solidarity and Contention*, 75.

ing in 1944 (when Soviet troops stood by and allowed the Home Army to be defeated by the Nazis), Polish independence, and human dignity.<sup>161</sup> Kubik, noting that the Pope spoke from a square that Polish authorities frequently used to address the people, explains that the Pope's visit brought an end to the "Party-state's monopoly over public discourse in Poland." About a million people attended this first mass and those that could not attend watched it on television. Almost three million people attended the final mass of his visit a little over a week later.<sup>162</sup> Though Solidarity was not a religious movement, its close association with the Catholic Church and use of religious symbols strengthened its ability to mobilize the Polish population and to construct a sphere of activity separate from and in defiance of the state. Among its achievements was the construction of public spaces not reserved for the state, including the Gdańsk Monument and the Poznań Monument. Both incorporated crosses into their design, and, as Kubik explains, had been commemorated in religious ceremonies that emphasized the participation of society, rather than its subservience to the state.<sup>163</sup>

Slovak Catholic activists and East German pacifists did not experience such a mass mobilization of the population in a non-state event until the latter half of the 1980s (Velehrad, 1985; the revolutionary events of 1989). Yet, there are many important similarities to the Polish case. Just as Wóycicki had "seen the masses" for the first time in 1979, the 1980s also became a transformational decade for the very small groups of isolated Slovaks and East Germans that had begun organizing in the preceding decades. While Slovak Catholics experienced the inspiration and mobilizing influence of John Paul II's election, the mobilizing issue for East German pacifists was more secular in nature: the increased militarization of the cold war context. In the 1980s, Slovak Catholics and East German pacifists began expanding and transforming the nature of the free spaces that had been built by small groups in the earlier decades. Their efforts were supported by new opportunities to inform and mobilize Slovaks and East Germans through grassroots publishing and the transformation of traditional pilgrimages and religious services into new public arenas where the language and policies of state power could be challenged, often openly, through an assertion of religious beliefs and a critique of state policy grounded on Christian theology.

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<sup>161</sup> Stokes, *From Stalinism to Pluralism*, 200–203.

<sup>162</sup> Kubik, *The Power of Symbols*, 139.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 196–206, 214–216.

Grassroots activity in East Germany had a much more decentralized, and therefore local, nature than the Slovak secret church. Leipzig's church-sponsored groups were essentially special interest groups focusing on issues ranging from peace and the environment to poverty in the third world. In the 1980s, they began broadening their membership by reaching out to other citizens from their local communities interested in these issues. The Evangelical Church certainly helped build networks and introduce common themes between the groups in the city and between groups pursuing similar interest throughout the state, yet the activism remained largely local. The national structure of Aktion Sühnezeichen and the efforts of the Bausoldaten to build networks through its annual East German-wide peace seminars are the most evident exceptions to the localized character of church-sponsored groups. Former Bausoldaten, however, were most active throughout the year in local groups such as AG Friedensdienst. While a centralized East German environmental movement and peace movement did not exist, religion and peace functioned as unifying elements of all the church-sponsored groups; issues such as environmentalism, peace and poverty were all framed in terms of religious belief. For example, environmental protection, particularly after 1983, would be presented as the "protection of creation." Arguments made by pacifists emphasized the message of love in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. At the same time, the theme of peace intersected with environmental and other social issues, as reflected by AG Friedensdienst's broad view of peace as more than the absence of war. To paraphrase one perspective, what would be the point of saving the planet from nuclear destruction if the same outcome were going to be achieved through environmental destruction?



## CHAPTER 5

# From Prayers to Protests

In 1976, Slovak Catholics printed and distributed 2,000 copies of a leaflet critical of the regime's treatment of believers. Though the secret church had not yet developed its samizdat network to facilitate the distribution of this leaflet, several Western news organizations received copies. After condemning the regime's atheistic policies and advising Catholics to create their own circles for worship if they did not have good priests or laymen to turn to for spiritual guidance, the authors concluded with the following appeal to Czechoslovakia's believers: "Friends, get to know the laws of the ČSSR and stand up for their implementation with all your might. Do not remain silent, defend yourselves. Do not tolerate any injustice. Whoever tolerates injustice is guilty of the worst moral corruption. Do not close your eyes, do not pretend to be deaf, do something... Catholics, Protestants and all Christians unite!"<sup>1</sup> By demanding adherence to existing laws and arguing the importance of morals in daily life, the Slovak Catholic's appeal in this leaflet is remarkably similar to the ideas Charter 77 put forth in its founding declaration the following year. While many members of the Czech secret church structures belonged to Charter 77, none of the Slovaks who joined Charter 77 were active in the Slovak secret church. Until a religious revival in the 1980s, Slovakia's Catholics, including those in the secret church, did not pursue more politically oppositional activities.

The 1976 statement foreshadows an increased political activism among Catholics in Slovakia in the 1980s that was facilitated by the emergence of an extensive samizdat network and the transformation of pilgrimages into new public spaces in that decade. A parallel shift from prayers to protests occurred in East Germany where the Evangelical Church's protective cover became an obstacle to increased political activism. As will be exam-

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<sup>1</sup> "Slovak Catholics Protest," *Religion in Communist Lands* 4 (autumn 1976): 49.

ined in the case of Leipzig, AG Friedensdienst and other groups faced the challenge of stepping out of the church's protective cover and the benefits of church sponsorship.

### Petitions for Religious Freedom

As the pilgrimage tradition grew in popularity, Slovak Catholics, even those not active in secret church activity, became increasingly willing to sign letters and petitions protesting the absence of religious freedom in Czechoslovakia and other issues. With support from the secret church's communities and samizdat network, Catholic activists promoted several petition campaigns in the 1980s. The number of citizens willing to support such an initiative increased dramatically throughout this decade, reflecting the secret church's increasing ability to mobilize public support as well as the believers' view that they were entitled to certain rights.

The earliest petition initiatives in Slovakia protested the arrest of Slovak Catholics for participating in unofficial religious activity. A 1983 petition initiative remained small in scale, but rallied the support of Catholics, particularly those who had been active in the Rodina, to publicly protest the party-state's actions against believers. On Palm Sunday, March 27, 1983, security police raided the homes of Franciscans involved in secret church activity throughout Slovakia. They confiscated books and other religious materials and arrested eight Slovaks. In response, Silvester Krčméry and František Mikloško composed a letter of protest addressed to President Husák. Their letter criticized this police action and demanded the release of those arrested. Reminiscent of Charter 77's strategy of fighting for rights that existed on paper, but were not adhered to in practice, the authors argued that the Czechoslovak Constitution, the convention on religious tolerance endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 1981, and the Helsinki Final Act guaranteed Czechoslovak citizens religious freedom and the right to exchange information.<sup>2</sup> Mikloško and Krčméry traveled across Slovakia for three days collecting the signatures.<sup>3</sup> Altogether they collected eighty-seven signatures from Slovak priests and laymen, including Bishop Korec, Jan Čarnogurský, and several Catholics who had belonged to the Rodina since the late 1940s.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> "Open Letter of Slovak Catholics to President Gustáv Husák," *Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS)*, 6 June 1983, D1–D2.

<sup>3</sup> Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť*, 144.

<sup>4</sup> "Open Letter of Slovak Catholics to President Gustáv Husák," *FBIS*, 6 June 1983, D1.

In 1983, the Polish police arrested a young worker and two students from Slovakia—Alojz Gabaj, Bronislav Borovský, and Tomáš Konc—for attempting to transport religious books, tape recordings and pictures from Poland into Slovakia. Two years later, a judge in Bratislava sentenced the men to prison for periods ranging from fourteen to eighteen months.<sup>5</sup> The secret church had circulated small leaflets with pictures and personal information about the three students under the heading “Imprisoned for Religion” in 1983.<sup>6</sup> After their sentencing in 1985, Slovak Catholics sent several letters to President Husák protesting the imprisonment of these young Catholics and asked that their sentences be overturned. One letter, ten pages in length, addressed the main problems related to the religious situation in Slovakia. Citing religious freedoms guaranteed in the Helsinki Final Act, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Czechoslovak Constitution, the authors asked President Husák what right the secret police had to ask Czechoslovak believers questions such as “To which church do you go and with whom do you meet there?” “Do you receive any religious literature? From whom? When?” or “With whom do you meet for spiritual exercises?” The authors then posed several direct questions to Husák: “Why are new churches not built?” “Why do we have empty bishops’ seats?” and “Why do you lock up in prison people like Gabaj, Borovský, Konc, [and others]?”<sup>7</sup> These letters originated in Slovakia, and both were only signed “Catholic Youth of Slovakia,” so the authors’ identity remains unknown. Mikloško indicates that over 150 Slovaks signed a letter on behalf of the three.<sup>8</sup>

When the Czech and Slovak National Councils introduced plans to relax restrictions on abortion in 1986, the Slovak secret church quickly addressed this social issue with an information campaign and a petition initiative. The new proposals reduced the paperwork and reports necessary for abortions and permitted abortions up to the twelfth week of pregnancy.<sup>9</sup> The editors of samizdat periodicals, such as *Rodinné spoločenstvo* and *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť*, informed readers about the new proposals. *Rodinné spoločenstvo* published a four-page article titled “Preparing the

<sup>5</sup> See “Gabaj-Borovský-Konc,” *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 3 (1985): 22; *Výber* 4 (1985) unnumbered back of front cover. The letter is dated March 31, 1985, Bratislava.

<sup>6</sup> I found one of these tiny leaflets glued to the front cover of a copy of *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť*, 4 (1983) at the Czechoslovak Documentation Center.

<sup>7</sup> “My, mladí kresťania zo Slovenska,” Poľana, 7 December 1985, OSA. Another, shorter letter of protest was also circulated. See *Výber* 4 (1985): unnumbered back of front cover.

<sup>8</sup> Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť*, 146.

<sup>9</sup> “Abortion Opponents Petition ČSSR Authorities,” *FBIS*, 21 October 1986, D4; “Believers Must Not Force Their Opinions on Others,” *Kathpress News Agency*, 7 August 1986.

New Abortion Law” and began by asking readers how they could be shocked to watch seven astronauts die on television in the Challenger explosion and yet allow about four hundred unborn babies to die every day in Czechoslovakia. This article analyzed how the official press portrayed the law and critiqued their main points.<sup>10</sup> This samizdat also informed its readers of the progress of the opposition to the new abortion law by publishing progress reports and the text of letters protesting the law that were being sent to the authorities. In March, Slovak Catholic activists composed a letter to Peter Colotka, the Prime Minister of Slovakia, voicing opposition to any proposals that would still permit abortion. They concluded the letter: “If the Slovak National Council should decide not to reject this law, we demand that in Slovakia the issue of this new law be decided by a referendum.”<sup>11</sup> The authors had already collected the signatures of 6,518 Slovaks to demonstrate their support for these demands.<sup>12</sup> Later that month, an additional fifty Slovaks from Banská Bystrica (central Slovakia) addressed a letter to Prime Minister Colotka with similar protests against the revisions to the abortion law.<sup>13</sup> Cardinal Tomášek in Prague, who had received copies of these letters and the petition, issued his own protest to the Czechoslovak government in April. He also expressed support for the protests of Slovakia’s Catholics: “They protest against this law in the name of Catholic Christians, as believers and as citizens [acting from] a human point of view.”<sup>14</sup> In the Czech lands, popular opposition to the abortion law revisions did not emerge until late summer and their protests followed the lead set by the Slovaks half a year earlier. Czech and Moravian Catholics launched their own petition campaign, collecting a total of 9,399 signatures. Of this total, 2,623 signatures were seized by the police before they could be formally sent to the authorities.<sup>15</sup> The letter that accompanied the signatures to the Czech National Council dated September 1, 1986 cited the 6,518 Slovaks that had

<sup>10</sup> “Pripravuje sa nový zákon o interrupcii,” *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 3 (1986): 15–18.

<sup>11</sup> “List predsedovi vlády SSR,” *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 3 (1986): 21–22 and “List predsedovi vlády a predsedníctvu SNR,” *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 3 (1986): 19–20.

<sup>12</sup> “List predsedovi vlády a predsedníctvu SNR,” 20. For a reporting of the number of signatures collected, see *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 3 (1986): 21–22.

<sup>13</sup> The letter is dated March 25, 1986, Banská Bystrica. For the text, see *Informace o církvi* 5 (1986): 7–8.

<sup>14</sup> *Informace o církvi* 5 (1986): 6–7. A copy of this letter can also be found in KI: CZ ROM 8/2 Tomášek, František.

<sup>15</sup> “Katolíci o připravované novelizaci zákona o interrupcích,” *Informace o církvi* 10 (1986): 6.

already demonstrated their opposition to this law, to strengthen their argument. The Czech authors, like their Slovak counterparts, also demanded a referendum to decide the issue if other avenues to overturn the legislation failed.<sup>16</sup>

In contrast to the earlier initiatives protesting the arrest of Slovak Catholics, this petition initiative addressing the abortion issue received broader support extending beyond the most active leaders of the Slovak secret church. The 1986 petition on the abortion issue indicates the extent of the secret church's development as a movement and its ability to mobilize its members to support a social issue. First, the 6,518 signatures were reportedly collected in only a couple of days, a task that would be very difficult to complete without the secret church's network of communities and samizdat to support the initiative. During the first petition campaign in 1983, Mikloško and Krčméry, collecting the signatures individually by car rather than fully utilizing the secret church's structure to collect signatures, had succeeded in collecting eighty-seven signatures, impressive for the time, but quite small compared to the number collected in 1986. The success of this 1986 petition may also be related to the impact of the post-Velehrad religious revival and the secret church's ability to capitalize on this change in the religious atmosphere. It also indicates the willingness of Slovak Catholics to publicly address a social issue so closely related to religious belief. Second, the leaders of the Slovak secret church demonstrated their ability to take the lead in opposing the party-state's policies. By preceding Cardinal Tomášek's letter and the petition of Catholics in the Czech lands, Slovak Catholics formulated their own demands and a strategy to promote those demands, both of which were later emulated by Czechs and Moravians. Finally, the Slovak secret church's engagement with this important social issue reflects many of the elements characteristic of civil society. As a structure autonomous from the state, the Slovak secret church articulated its values and attempted to advance its own interests against that of the state in its opposition to the proposed reform of the abortion law. In addition to expressing these values to the state in a letter supported by 6,518 signatures, it used its two largest samizdat periodicals to inform readers about the reform and promote opposition to it.

In 1987, a Moravian Catholic named Augustin Navrátil introduced a 31-point petition for religious freedom that became the largest and most significant petition campaign in Czechoslovakia. On December 20, Navrátil

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<sup>16</sup> "České národní radě" *Informace o církvi* 10 (1986): 6–7. See also "Petitions Call For Halt to Abortion Law Reform," *SWB*, 7 October 1986.

launched the petition by sending the text with a letter of explanation to leading figures in the Czechoslovak government, including Miloš Jakeš (General Secretary), Vladimír Janků of the Secretariat for Religious Affairs, as well as to Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Tomášek.<sup>17</sup> The first point reflects the general theme of this petition: “Our fundamental demand is a separation of the Church from the state, which would have the result that the state would not interfere in the organization and activities of the Church. From this fundamental demand the majority of our remaining proposals would be fulfilled.”<sup>18</sup> The other points focused on specific aspects of this separation, such as: the selection of bishops without state interference, that the state not interfere in the selection of students or faculty at seminaries, the right of believers to form independent lay associations, that the production and distribution of religious texts not be an illegal act, and that the jamming of Vatican Radio and Radio Free Europe’s religious broadcasts be stopped. The petition also demanded the rehabilitation of unlawfully sentenced priests, active laymen and members of religious orders and an end to discrimination against Christians in the workplace. The thirty-first point proposed that a commission be established composed of representatives of state and church bodies, including laymen nominated by Cardinal Tomášek and representatives of the Catholic Church in Slovakia, to deal with these demands and their resolution. Like Charter 77, this petition based its demands on rights already guaranteed by the state in the constitution (point 29) and in international covenants: “Point 30. We demand also, that every valid law and obligatory regulation concerning directly or indirectly the sphere of religion would [conform] to International agreements on civil and political rights.”<sup>19</sup> In a brief letter issued on January 4, 1988, Cardinal Tomášek, further demonstrating his willingness to act independently of state authorities, offered powerful words of support to this petition action: “The dissemination and signing of this petition is in accord with our constitution... I remind you that cowardice and fear are not worthy of a true Christian. I am with you in spirit and

<sup>17</sup> “Seznámení s návrhy věřících občanů,” 1987, KI: CZ ROM 2 Navrátil, Augustin.

<sup>18</sup> The full text of the petition is six pages in length, and in addition to the 31-points, it briefly explains nine concrete problems of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia. “Podněty katolíkov k riešeniu situácie veriacich občanov v CSR,” 2, KI: CZ ROM 11/3 Protests. Samizdat publishers included abridged versions of this petition that generally only listed the 31-points, although in 1989 the Czech samizdat periodical *Křesťanské obzory* published the original full text of the petition followed by five pages in which the background and reasoning to each point is explained in greater detail. See *Křesťanské obzory* 22 (1989): 19–32.

<sup>19</sup> “Podněty katolíkov,” 2–5.

wholeheartedly bless you.”<sup>20</sup> One of Tomášek’s advisers, Tomáš Halík, cites Tomášek’s approval of this petition as evidence of his desire to take a stronger position against the party-state.<sup>21</sup> Following Cardinal Tomášek’s appeal for support, the collection of signatures began. Estimates from signature collectors and samizdat reports indicate that in the following year an estimated 600,000 Czechoslovak citizens signed their names to support the demands enunciated in the petition.<sup>22</sup>

The success of Navrátil’s 31 point petition in 1987 reveals much about the organizational development of the Slovak secret church in the late 1980s and the difficulties of gaining mass support for an initiative in an authoritarian system. Since 1977, Navrátil had organized several petitions with nearly similar demands for religious freedom, but none had succeeded in the way that the 1987 petition had. In 1988, Augustin Navrátil released information about his earlier attempts during an interview with the Slovak political samizdat periodical *Fragment K* and also published information and documentation of the initiatives in a series of articles in *Křesťanské obzory*.<sup>23</sup> Navrátil explained that the fourteen points of his 1977 petition, named “Petition of Kroměříž Catholics” after a small town in Moravia, had only limited success: “After the approval of this petition by Cardinal Tomášek, We—with a friend [Janá] Pavlíček—began the petition action in Kroměříž and its closest surroundings. When we had 700 signatures, state security interfered and both of us were charged with the offence of incitement.”<sup>24</sup> The authorities sentenced Pavlíček to eight months in prison and placed Navrátil in a psychiatric ward.<sup>25</sup> In 1983, after his release, Navrátil expanded his petition to twenty points, but rather than collecting signatures, he first attempted to establish the legality of his demands by sending copies of the petition to about fifty state offices and legal consultants. Two years later, in January 1985, Navrátil submitted this petition to President Husák with a cover letter containing brief summaries of the few evasive responses he had received to his inquiry. Many of the respondents either claimed lack

<sup>20</sup> “Dopis otce Kardinála Tomáška,” *Informace o církvi* 2 (1988): 7 and “Riešit situáciu veriacich v ČSSR,” *Rodinne spoločenstvo* 2 (1988): 13.

<sup>21</sup> Halík, interview.

<sup>22</sup> Mikloško interview.

<sup>23</sup> *Fragment K* 3 (1988): 24.

<sup>24</sup> Navrátil describes this early petition action in an August 1988 letter that introduced the 1977 petition and other documentation related to the petition and his subsequent arrest. “Pravda o petiční akci s názvem Podněty katolik k řešení situace věřících občanů v ČSSR,” *Křesťanské obzory* 5 (1988): 5.

<sup>25</sup> For additional documentation related to his arrest, see *ibid.*, 6–22.

of competence in constitutional law or directed him to take his inquiry elsewhere.<sup>26</sup> Navrátil apparently never initiated any effort to collect signatures from Catholics to support this petition and the petition was not really heard from again until several western news organizations reported that they had received a document called the “Charter of Czechoslovak Believers” with sixteen demands for religious freedom in September 1987. The document concluded by appealing to Catholics outside of Czechoslovakia to express these demands to Czechoslovak authorities.<sup>27</sup> Western news organizations did not identify the author or indicate that any signatures had been collected within Czechoslovakia in support of these demands. In 1988, Navrátil acknowledged in a *Křesťanské obzory* article that he had been the author of this Charter published abroad, and that it had been based on his 1983/1985 petition.<sup>28</sup>

Different factors had prevented each of Navrátil’s earlier petition efforts from reaching the scale of the 1987–88 petition drive. The 1977 petition had received the support of Cardinal Tomášek and 700 signatures had been collected, but it had been limited to a small region in Moravia. With the arrest of the principle organizers, the signature collection had ended. In his cautious 1983/1985 effort, though he made his demands for religious freedom known to state and legal authorities in Czechoslovakia, including President Husák, Navrátil had not sought or received any public support. The transformation of this petition into the 1987 Charter successfully expressed these demands to the world, but by relying on publicity through Western media, it had again failed to achieve any demonstration of public support from within Czechoslovakia.

This analysis raises several important and interrelated questions. First, how did the 31-point petition introduced by Navrátil in December 1987 successfully overcome the shortcomings of his earlier petition efforts? Secondly, why did Slovaks respond to this petition action with such strong and quick support? And most importantly, what does the success of this petition action reveal about the Slovak secret church?

The immediate and enthusiastic response of Slovak Catholics played a vital role in the success of this petition initiative. Although a Moravian Catholic had initiated this 31-point petition and its original title (“Catholic Sugges-

<sup>26</sup> *Fragment K 3* (1988): 25. For the text of this letter and petition to Husák, see copy in KI: CZ ROM 2 Navrátil, Augustine or *Křesťanské obzory* 7 (1988): 1–4.

<sup>27</sup> “Charter of Believers in Czechoslovakia,” *KNS* 384 (24 September 1987) and “‘Text’ of ‘Charter of Believers’” *FBIS*, 4 September 1987, 4–5.

<sup>28</sup> “Vysvětlení k Dalšímu průběhu petiční akce,” *Křesťanské obzory* 7 (1988): 12.



tions Regarding a Solution for the Situation of Believers in the ČSR [Czech Socialist Republic]” spoke only to the situation in the Czech lands, activists in the Slovak secret church immediately appropriated the petition as if it were their own. One samizdat reports that in the small Slovak town of Orava members of the Slovak secret church collected 5,000 signatures in only three days.<sup>29</sup> On January 16, a delegation of Slovak believers delivered the first 18,393 signatures to Cardinal Tomášek in Prague. A few days later, two weeks after the signature collection began, an estimated 95,000–100,000 Slovaks had signed the petition.<sup>30</sup> *Rodinné spoločenstvo* reported that of the 364,000 total signatures collected by the end of February 1988, 289,000 Slovaks had signed the petition in contrast to 75,000 Czechs and Moravians at that time.<sup>31</sup> Silvester Krčméry, one of individuals personally responsible for collecting signatures in Slovakia, reported that more than half of the total came from Slovakia. Signature collectors in the Czech lands eventually caught up, but final counts estimated the total number of signatures from Slovakia at between 300,000–400,000.<sup>32</sup>

At the same time that Navrátil was finalizing the 31-point petition and seeking official approval from Cardinal Tomášek, activists in the Slovak secret church, apparently unaware of Navrátil’s petition, had already developed plans for a large-scale signature collecting campaign. František Mikloško explains: “It was very interesting because we thought about some similar action here [in Slovakia], and we had prepared the whole structure of the action. When Cardinal Tomášek announced that he supported the whole action, we were prepared. So in two weeks, we had 100,000 signatures. In the Czech lands, they were absolutely [surprised] that we could collect 100,000 signatures in two or three weeks.”<sup>33</sup> Mikloško, in conjunction with Silvester Krčméry and Vladimír Jukl, coordinated the resources of the Slovak secret church to collect signatures for

<sup>29</sup> “Podpisová akce věřících,” *Informace o církvi* 2 (1988): 7.

<sup>30</sup> *Křesťanské obzory* reports that after two weeks, 95,000 signatures had been collected. *Křesťanské obzory* 7 (1988): 27. Bishop Korec also writes that Slovak Catholics had collected up to 100,000 signatures in the first two weeks. Korec, *Od barbarské noci na slobode*, 404.

<sup>31</sup> “K podpisom zo Slovenska,” *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 17 (1988/2): 16.

<sup>32</sup> Krčméry informed me that copies of Slovak signatures were kept by Čarnogurský at the Christian Democratic Movement office in Bratislava. Krčméry, interview. *Křesťanské obzory*’s tally in September 1988 issue gave 300,000 of 500,000 total signatures to Slovakia. *Křesťanské obzory* 7 (1988): 28. Čarnogurský placed the total count from Slovakia at 400,000. Čarnogurský, interview.

<sup>33</sup> Mikloško, interview.

the campaign, to which Bishop Korec lent his own support as one of the first Slovak signers.<sup>34</sup> The most active leaders of the secret church's communities, particularly in the Lay Apostle Movement, implemented the actual collection of signatures.<sup>35</sup> Juraj Kohutiar, who collected signatures with fellow members of this movement, described the planned effort: "We collected in front of churches after the services, and that was the main and most effective method... We distributed the churches and the responsibilities. And then it started to spread out of Bratislava... After services we just stood in front of the door and had the text of the petition and the signature papers, so people just came and read and signed."<sup>36</sup> To counter the possibility of police confiscating or destroying collected signatures, Krčméry explained that as soon as one hundred signatures had been collected, copies were made and kept in a secure place.<sup>37</sup> The originals were submitted to Cardinal Tomášek either directly or through an intermediary such as Augustine Navrátil or Václav Benda.<sup>38</sup> Cardinal Tomášek then submitted the signatures to the state authorities. In addition to organizing the signature collection outside of churches, Slovak samizdat editors helped publicize the action. The second issue of *Rodinné spoločenstvo* in 1988 published the 31-points of the petition in Slovak and changed the title of the petition, explaining that the demands referred to a "solution for the believers in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic" rather than just in the Czech lands. The petition was preceded by the full text of Cardinal Tomášek's letter of support and a short explanation of how many people had already signed the petition.<sup>39</sup>

Much of this petition's success came from the support of prominent leaders in the official church hierarchy and Catholics not active in the

<sup>34</sup> Korec, *Od barbarskej noc na slobode*, 403.

<sup>35</sup> Krčméry, interview; Kohutiar, interview. Both Kohutiar and Korec identified the Lay Apostolate movement as particularly active in the signature collection. Korec, *Od barbarskej noci na slobode*, 2.

<sup>36</sup> Kohutiar, interview. Krčméry also reported this strategy of waiting by the doors of churches. Krčméry, interview.

<sup>37</sup> Krčméry, interview.

<sup>38</sup> Václav Benda reported that he received thousands of signatures and passed them on to Cardinal Tomášek. Václav Benda, interview by author, Prague, Czech Republic, 24 July 1996. Krčméry claimed responsibility for collecting 150,000 signatures and explained that he sent them to Navrátil. Krčméry, interview.

<sup>39</sup> *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 2 (1988): 13–16. *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* also publicized the petition action. *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 2 (1988). Czech samizdat periodical *Informace o církvi* publicized the petition in the same manner. *Informace o církvi* 2 (1988): 7–10. See also Korec, *Od barbarskej noci na slobode*, 405.

secret church. Cardinal Tomášek's letter of support helped make the petition acceptable to many believers in Czechoslovakia. Also, Navrátil's 31-point petition, initiated several years after Velehrad and midway through the Marian Year, made its appearance at the height of the religious revival in Slovakia. This context brought the petition support from local Catholic priests and Catholics not involved in the secret church. Bishop Korec describes several priests who expressed their support for the demands of the petition to their congregation while speaking from the pulpit. In one case, a priest at St. Martin's Cathedral in Bratislava directed the attention of the congregation to the petition by referring to an earlier protest that had been made in that city: "If consumers are able to organize a petition for better beer at Mamut [a famous local beer hall] with positive results, then believers at least have the right also to demand the fulfillment of their requests."<sup>40</sup> One young Slovak Catholic, not involved with the secret church, remembers that her teachers in Eastern Slovakia had warned her not to sign, arguing that it would ruin her future educational prospects. At her village church, however, her priest spoke in favor of the petition, and as she left the church she was asked to sign the petition by someone waiting outside. She recalled that she was a little worried about signing her name, but signed it because it was for religious rights, and in her view "not something political." She also explained that she was emboldened by the fact that others were signing the petition and doubted that the police "would go through all those names." She recalled that later she was very confused when this same priest, as a member of *Pacem in Terris*, condemned the petition.<sup>41</sup> The circumstances and reasons behind every signature certainly varied greatly, but this account illustrates one way in which a young Catholic women, with no ties or previous association to the secret church, became an active supporter of one of the Slovak secret church's biggest initiatives in the public sphere. Despite the threats to her future education, she signed the 31-point petition because of her priest's encouragement, a sense of safety in numbers, and a genuine belief in the demands for religious freedom expressed in the petition.

Although much of the signature collection was probably already completed by the time the summer pilgrimages began, discussion of the 31 demands at the pilgrimages carried the momentum of the petition into the fall of 1988. At the September 1988 pilgrimage in Šaštín, the night pro-

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<sup>40</sup> Korec, *Od barbarskej noci na slobode*, 405.

<sup>41</sup> She was only asked to sign her name and not give an address or identification number. Ludmila B., interview by author, Bratislava, Slovakia, 4 August 1996.

gram began with a reading of the 31-point petition.<sup>42</sup> Through the pilgrimage tradition, the Slovak secret church could gain support from Catholics not active in the secret church. Non-Catholics and even non-Christians in Czechoslovakia also reportedly supported this petition.<sup>43</sup> In February 1988, Charter 77 issued its official support of the 31-points and the signature collection.<sup>44</sup> Several signature collectors also reported that Slovak Protestants signed the petition, despite the fact that the demands were tailored toward particular Catholic problems.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to the Slovak secret church mobilizing its resources, a variety of factors contributed to the success of this petition. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Voice of America and Vatican Radio helped publicize the text of the petition among Czechoslovaks by broadcasting information about it into Czechoslovakia.<sup>46</sup> Both Bishop Korec and Mikloško credit their contact with Anton Hlinka of Voice of America in Munich for publicizing these more public activities of the secret church.<sup>47</sup> Mikloško explained that Hlinka was an important avenue for getting information publicized in the west and that he also frequently passed on information to contacts in Vatican Radio.<sup>48</sup>

Reviewing the success of this petition action, Ján Čarnogurský repeated an argument he had already made in several earlier essays analyzing the secret church structure and the pilgrimage tradition by saying: "It again was proof that the secret church was well organized."<sup>49</sup> As a social movement, the secret church had gathered signatures from its own communities and Slovaks not involved in the secret church to support demands against the authorities in the public sphere. Its ability to do so depended not only on its organizational resources, such as its communities

<sup>42</sup> Martinec, interview.

<sup>43</sup> "K podpisom zo Slovenska," *Rodinne spoločenstvo* 2 (1988): 16.

<sup>44</sup> "Podpora petiční akce za náboženské svobody," in *Charta 77*, 333–334. Czech religious samizdat republished this statement of support, see "Petice," *Informace o církvi* 4 (1988): 21.

<sup>45</sup> Kohutiar, interview; Čarnogurský, interview.

<sup>46</sup> John Tagliabue, "Czechoslovak Catholics Appealing for Rights," *New York Times*, 21 February 1988, 10. In January, Vatican Radio broadcasted the text of the 31-points into Czechoslovakia. "Catholic Petition for Greater Religious Freedom," *SWB*, 19 January 1988.

<sup>47</sup> Korec, *Od barbarskej noci na slobode*, 406.

<sup>48</sup> Mikloško, interview.

<sup>49</sup> Čarnogurský, interview; For his earlier analysis of secret church organization, see Ján Čarnogurský, "O putiach a o inom," July 1988, OSA-Dissident/Personalities, Čarnogurský. Also, see Čarnogurský, "The Underground Church," 34–37.

and samizdat network, but also on other developments taking place within Slovakia, such as support from church leaders in the official hierarchy, the religious revival and the renewed interest in pilgrimages, which provided a venue for publicizing the petition drive. As the comments of the young Catholic women who signed the petition outside of her church illustrates, she perceived the petition as a religious, rather than a political matter, and therefore could justify signing it. Navrátil's earlier failed petition efforts had demonstrated the necessity of each of these developments.

Each petition campaign organized by the Slovak secret church in the 1980s failed to win a single concession from the state. The authorities denied the Pope permission to visit Czechoslovakia, the Slovak National Council passed the reformed abortion law, and the state refused to implement any of the 31 demands in Navrátil's petition. Through these petitions, however, Slovak Catholics took small steps toward expressing their dissatisfaction with the regime and its policies. Václav Havel once criticized a scene in one of Milan Kundera's novels, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, that portrayed petitions as useless actions that only served to draw attention to the petition's author. Havel instead argued that petitions should be viewed as part of a process "in which people's civic backbones began to straighten again." Havel also argued that petitions helped build international interest in the internal situation in Czechoslovakia. Petitions, therefore, created a new situation in which the state became less willing to use repression against independent initiatives for fear of international protest that would follow. Havel explains that the new situation did not make the state more tolerant, but rather forced it to get used to the new situation.<sup>50</sup> Václav Benda made a similar analysis by pointing out that most of the 241 original signers of Charter 77 were persecuted by police, but ten years later the situation had changed enough for 600,000 people to sign the 31-point petition without any prosecution.<sup>51</sup>

Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of glasnost and perestroika also lent strength to the demands of the Slovak secret church's activists. President Husák had resisted these policies, but Slovakia's Catholics incorporated the language of glasnost and perestroika in their appeals to the state. In December 1987, ninety-eight Catholic priests from the Košice diocese sent a letter to President Husák appealing for qualified bishops approved by Pope John Paul II to fill the empty episcopal seats in Slovakia. At that time, only two episcopal vacancies had been filled in Slovakia and the

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<sup>50</sup> Havel, *Disturbing the Peace*, 173–177.

<sup>51</sup> Benda, interview.

Košice diocese had been without a bishop for twenty-five years. Near the end of the letter the priests write: "Recently we have been witnessing many changes which demand new thinking and new standpoints."<sup>52</sup> This reference to "new thinking" surfaced again half a year later after the regional court in Banská Bystrica sentenced Ivan Polanský to four years in prison in June 1988. He was charged with committing activities threatening the security of the Republic for his work in the publication and distribution of religious samizdat from his hometown of Nove Dubnice in central Slovakia. In July 1988, a letter of petition signed by 3,968 Slovaks was sent to President Husák urging him to revoke the sentence given to Polanský: "Our press continuously appeals for the need for new thinking, even the rebuilding of social relations. The trial of Ivan Polanský is a manifestation of old thinking. By continuing trials like this in Czechoslovakia, no rebuilding of social relations is possible. The Republic would be strengthened, if an open discussion about all social problems were possible, because only in these discussions may the truth be found and the way to the future uncovered."<sup>53</sup> This letter's reference to "new thinking" indicates that the expansion of the secret church's sphere of activities in the 1980s was taking place not only in the context of a religious revival in Slovakia, but also in the context of the introduction of perestroika and glasnost in the Soviet Union. Slovak Catholics referenced a desire for similar reforms in Czechoslovakia.

### **The Good Friday Demonstration: March 25, 1988**

The most public expression of civic initiative among Slovaks took the form of a public demonstration in Bratislava on March 25, 1988. František Mikloško and Ján Čarnogurský, who had become two of the most politically oriented members of the Slovak secret church, organized the demonstration, though they both acknowledged that the idea for the initiative came from a Slovak active in the émigré community living in Canada, the hockey player Marion Šťastný. Šťastný wanted Slovak émigrés from all over the world to stage demonstrations for freedom in Slovakia in front of Czechoslovak embassies on March 25. Čarnogurský reported that Šťastný contacted him to organize the demonstration in Slovakia, leaving the form and content of the demonstration completely up to him.<sup>54</sup> Čarnogurský and Mikloško planned a

<sup>52</sup> "Catholic Priests' Plea to President Husák For More Bishops," *SWB*, 5 February 1988.

<sup>53</sup> "Podpisy na obranu Ivana Polanskeho," *Informace o cirkvi* 8 (1988): 16.

<sup>54</sup> Čarnogurský, interview; Mikloško, interview.

half hour peaceful demonstration that would begin at 6:00 p.m. in front of the National Theater in Hviezdoslav square in Bratislava. Čarnogurský, a lawyer by profession, wrote a letter to the local authorities announcing their intent to hold a public demonstration on March 25 and outlining the legal basis for the demonstration (one requirement was such a letter). Due to Čarnogurský's close affiliation with the political opposition, from which the secret church hoped to distance itself, only Mikloško signed the letter.<sup>55</sup> In this letter, dated March 10, they explained the goals of the demonstration: "At the demonstration we want to support the demand to fill the vacant episcopal vacancies in accordance with the decision of the Holy Father, greater religious freedom in Czechoslovakia, and for complete adherence to the civil law in Czechoslovakia."<sup>56</sup> The third point was designed to give the demonstration a broader appeal to those interested simply in greater civil rights within the country: "the demonstration was an attempt again to meld religious dissent and civic [dissent]."<sup>57</sup>

Publicizing this demonstration in only two weeks required the help of foreign broadcast stations and the secret church's lay communities. Mikloško reported that, as soon as they mailed the March 10 letter, he contacted Anton Hlinka of Voice of America in Munich. Hlinka passed on the information about the demonstration to Vatican Radio.<sup>58</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Voice of America and Vatican Radio included information about the demonstration in their broadcasts into Czechoslovakia. In Slovakia, notices on church signboards announced the demonstration and instructed believers, "We will express our assent with these demands by holding a lit candle during the gathering."<sup>59</sup> The secret church also promoted the demonstration through the weekly meetings of its communities, encouraging its members to attend and issuing security instructions on what to do if detained by the police at the demonstration. Members were instructed that the best strategy was not to speak at all, but if they did so, they should be careful not to speak about other people and the system of meetings within the secret church. Young people were advised not to be afraid of threats of

<sup>55</sup> Čarnogurský, interview.

<sup>56</sup> "Verejne zhromazdenie," *Bratislavské listy*, 1 (1988): 9 and "Vyzva k verejnemu zhromazdeniu," *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 2 (1988): 42.

<sup>57</sup> Čarnogurský, interview.

<sup>58</sup> Mikloško, interview. For text of March 23 Vatican Radio report on upcoming demonstration, see *SWB*, 28 March 1988.

<sup>59</sup> These signboard announcements were later republished in samizdat, such as "Vyzva k ucasti na zhromazdeni veriacich 25 Marca o 18:00 hod," *Bratislavské listy* 1 (1988): 10; and *Informace o cirkvi*, 4 (1988): 25.

school expulsion. They were also told that, if possible, they should mention contacts abroad that would be able to publicize their case. Other instructions included finding whether they had been charged with anything or whether the interrogation was only for information. If charged, they were instructed to ask for their lawyer before speaking. Also, they were advised not to agree to meet with the police outside of the police station.<sup>60</sup>

Though the authorities banned the demonstration, harassed the leaders of the secret church, and hinted at a violent response, plans for the demonstration remained unaltered. On March 21, Mikloško submitted a second letter (again written by Čarnogurský) to the local authorities arguing that the ban violated the law and the constitution. The letter concluded by stating that the demonstration would go on as planned. On March 24 Vatican Radio transmitted the full text of this letter in Slovak into Slovakia.<sup>61</sup> In the days preceding the demonstration, the police kept Mikloško and other high profile members of the secret church, such as Korec, Krčméry, and Čarnogurský under close police surveillance and frequently interrogated them. On the day of the demonstration, the police arrested Mikloško in the morning and prevented Krčméry and Korec from reaching the square.<sup>62</sup> The authorities also announced that anyone present in the square or in the town center at the time of the demonstration would be in violation of the ban. Some officials in the Slovak Catholic Church officially condemned the demonstration beforehand on March 23.<sup>63</sup>

On Friday, March 25, and an estimated 2,000 people gathered in front of the National Theater in Hviezdoslav Square at 6:00 p.m.<sup>64</sup> Monika C., a thir-

<sup>60</sup> Kohutiar, interview.

<sup>61</sup> "Demonstration in Bratislava," *SWB*, 28 March 1988. For the letter, see *Bratislavské listy* 1 (1988): 10.

<sup>62</sup> Mikloško, interview. Krčméry reported that the police refused to let him leave his home. Krčméry, interview; Korec, *Od barbarskej noci na sloboda*, 409. A Vatican Radio report, several hours before the demonstration began, indicated that it had already received reports of this surveillance of Catholics in Bratislava. *SWB*, 28 March 1988.

<sup>63</sup> "Slovak Church Office on Planned Demonstration," *FBIS*, 25 March 1988, 15.

<sup>64</sup> Members of the western press estimated 2,000 people in the square for the demonstration. Several ORF (Austrian Radio and Television) correspondents were in the square covering the event. "Police Break up Bratislava Church Demonstration," *FBIS*, 28 March 1988, 9. Estimates regarding the actual number of participants at this demonstration vary. Articles in Slovakia's *Pravda* following the demonstration were of course critical of the western media's coverage of this event. One article accepts that there were 2,000 people in the square, but that of these, only 500–600 were active participants and the others were onlookers or security personnel. "VOA, RFE Spread Rumors on Demonstration," *FBIS*, 31 March 1988, 6. Another *Pravda* article took issue not with the num-



teen-year-old Catholic member of a secret church community in Bratislava, stood among the demonstrators in the center of the square. She knew Mikloško personally from her involvement in the secret church and came to the square shortly before 6:00 p.m. with about ten other people from the secret church, including her parents, carrying only candles and umbrellas, because it was raining. Monika and her parents had learned about the demonstration through their secret church communities in Bratislava. In Hviezdoslav Square, she spotted several other Catholics from these communities. There were people of all ages, from babies to older people, as well as many young people. She also recalled seeing a lot of people standing along the edge of the square just watching the demonstration. Monika explained that at 6:00 p.m. she and the other demonstrators began praying and continued to do so even after the police, about ten minutes later, announced that everyone was to leave the square. She recalls seeing the police hitting the other demonstrators and spraying them with water cannon: "We prayed for some time because there were no policemen near us. Then [some came to us] and they started to be violent. They shouted at some of the older people and then at some of our parents, so then we ran away to the center of the city because it looked dangerous... Our friends stayed there [in the square], finished the prayer and then left."<sup>65</sup> Some members of her community were hurt by the police, but her family left the square uninjured.

Another young Slovak who attended the demonstration experienced it from a different perspective. Peter B., a twenty-year-old university student from Bratislava, who had had no prior contact with the secret church or other independent movements in Czechoslovakia, also came to the demonstration. As an atheist, Peter B. explained that, in addition to wanting to see what would happen, "for me, there was the possibility there to demonstrate my opinion. I was against the Communist regime." Peter B. had learned about the demonstration from both Radio Free Europe and Voice of America about two weeks earlier, and said that everyone had been talking about it. He went to the square alone that evening, about a half an hour before the scheduled start of the demonstration. He recalled seeing a lot of people in the streets heading toward the square, including police and vehicles with water can-

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ber, but with the claim that the square was "full" by writing, "It is really true that some 2,000 people were there, including curious onlookers, but of course, the square was far from full." "Bratislava Demonstration Viewed," *FBIS*, 7 April 1988, 7. With the exception of a demonstration in Wolfsthal, Austria, four kilometers away and the closest Austrian village to Bratislava, none of the other demonstrations originally planned by Šťastný took place.

<sup>65</sup> Monika C., interview by author, Bratislava, Slovakia, 20 June 1996.

nons. Peter B. did not join the active demonstrators in the center of the square at 6:00, but watched with other bystanders from the edge of the square about fifty meters away. He explained that when he saw that the demonstration was peaceful, with only praying and singing, he did not think anything would happen. At about ten minutes after 6:00, he saw police cars begin circling the square and gunning their engines, which he thought was to drown out the sounds of the demonstration and separate the active demonstrators from the onlookers. Before police blocked his view and forced him to leave the square, he saw the police attack the demonstrators with water cannon and dogs.<sup>66</sup>

Monika C. and Peter B.'s perspectives to the demonstration illustrate how the Slovak secret church successfully mobilized people of very different backgrounds to attend this public demonstration. News reports by western correspondents present in the square, photographs, and even film footage taken of the demonstration support their account of the peaceful nature of the demonstration and the violent police response, which included the police driving vehicles through the middle of the square to disperse the crowds.<sup>67</sup> The police arrested 125 people who had participated in the demonstration. Slovak samizdat had played a minor role in publicizing the demonstration, but religious and political samizdat issues published after the event were filled with participant and eyewitness accounts of the demonstration, documentation related to the demonstration and analysis of the significance of the demonstration.<sup>68</sup> *Rodinné spoločenstvo* even published the transcript of po-

<sup>66</sup> Peter B., interview by author, Bratislava, Slovakia, 2 August 1996.

<sup>67</sup> For photos of different stages of the demonstration, apparently taken from the upper floor of a nearby building, see Korec, *Bratislavský veľký piatok*. For film footage of the demonstration, see Hanák, *Papierové hlavy* (Slovakia: Ales, 1995). "Czechoslovak Police Disperse Catholics at Rally," *New York Times*, 27 March 1988, 10.

<sup>68</sup> The entire first issue of Čarnogursky's *Bratislavské listy* was dedicated to the demonstration with articles, analysis, and documentation. See *Bratislavské listy* 1 (1988). Other samizdat coverage includes: Hana Ponická, "Hodina Bratislavy," *Fragment K* 2 (1988): 34–40. (Ponická's account was republished several times in religious samizdat such as *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 3 [1988] and *Informace o cirkvi* 6 [1988]); "O jednej polhodinke" and "Zvestovanie o sviatku zvestovania," both in *Rodinne spoločenstvo* 3 (1988): 18–29; "Bratislavské udalosti," *Hlas Slovenska*, 2 (1988): 19–23; Jakub Sojka, "Tri dni v jednom meste," *Fragment K* 2 (1988): 13–16.; Ivan Hoffman, "Kde bol Kristus," *Fragment K* 2 (1988): 22–24; "Vyzva z Bratislavy," *Katolícky mesačník* 4 (1988): 16–17; "Pokojná manifestace verících v Bratislave," *Informace o cirkvi* 5 (1988): 9; "Demonstrace a manifestace," *Informace o cirkvi* 6 (1988): 16–17; and "25. Marec 1988," *Naboženstvo a súčasnosť* 1 (1989): 35–37. For two additional accounts of personal experiences at the demonstration, see "Videli sme na namesti," Bratislava, 25 March 1988.

lice radio orders that had been recorded during the demonstration, documenting both the orders to use violence and police disorganization and confusion during the demonstration.<sup>69</sup> Shortly after the demonstration, a 220-page book documenting various aspects of the demonstration was published in Vienna and distributed in Slovakia.<sup>70</sup>

Within Slovakia, the violent response of the police inspired further expressions of civic initiative in the form of letters and petitions sent to government authorities by Slovaks protesting the actions of the police. On March 29, Bishop Korec sent a letter to Slovak Prime Minister Peter Colotka protesting the authorities' response to the demonstration. Referring to the demonstration as "Bratislava's Good Friday," Korec wrote: "Mr. Premier, It is in your power to put right at least something regarding what had happened and what should not have happened. It is within your authority to have the whole case investigated, to draw consequences from it and to have the general public at home and abroad informed about it."<sup>71</sup> A letter dated April 13, 1988 and signed by 512 parishioners of St. Martin's cathedral in Bratislava was sent to the Prime Minister of the ČSSR, Dr. Lubomir Strougal, supporting Korec's request for an investigation.<sup>72</sup> Another letter dated April 15, 1988 and signed by sixty-eight priests from the Košice Diocese and sent to Prime Minister Colotka protested the violent police response to the demonstration and concluded with an appeal: "Do everything that must be done to stop us believers feeling that injustice is done against us. Only the awareness of full religious freedom for us believers will make it possible for all believers to take a part in the work for the creation of a real democratic society

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and "Ako som prežila Bratislavský veľký piatok," both documents in KI: CZ/ROM 11/3 Protests.

<sup>69</sup> *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 3 (1988): 26–28. Peter B. also reported that he heard a recording of this police radio on Voice of America. He said that their accounts authentically described what he had witnessed first hand at the demonstration. Peter B., interview.

<sup>70</sup> Krčméry, interview; Korec also refers to this book. Korec, *Od barbarskej noci na sloboda*, 417. An English version of it is titled "The Good Friday of Bratislava" and was compiled by R.V. Tatran (a pseudonym). In 1994, this collection, edited by Korec, was formally published as Korec, *Bratislavský veľký piatok*.

<sup>71</sup> Korec's letter was republished in samizdat. See "List Otca Biskupa Korca," *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 3 (1988): 29–30 and *Informace o cirkvi* 5 (1988): 9–10. Vatican Radio also broadcast the text into Slovakia on April 6, 1988. "Vatican Radio Airs Clerics Appeals to Colotka," *FBIS*, 15 April 1988, 12–13. See also Korec, *Od barbarskej noci na sloboda*, 414–417.

<sup>72</sup> "Váženy sudruh predseda vlady," Bratislava, 13 April 1988, OSA. Vatican Radio also broadcasted the text of this letter in Slovak into Czechoslovakia on May 7, 1988. "Bratislava Believers Protest to Premier Strougal About Police Action," *SWB*, 13 May 1988.

fully and with greater enthusiasm.”<sup>73</sup> Though the demonstration was a Slovak event with predominantly religious orientation, dissident groups in the Czech lands immediately condemned the police response and offered support to the demonstrators. On March 29, Charter 77 issued a formal document condemning the police response.<sup>74</sup> Václav Benda reported that the Committee for Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted (VONS) helped the 125 people arrested pay the fines that they were given for attending the demonstration.<sup>75</sup>

On the day after the demonstration, Ján Čarnogurský told ORF (Austrian Radio-Television) in an interview that “the Bratislava demonstration had been a new form of civil protest that had been used for the first time in forty years.”<sup>76</sup> The March 25 demonstration, the first independent demonstration in Bratislava since 1968, demonstrates the secret church’s ability to mobilize its own members and encourage other segments of the population to publicly express demands against the regime. In its condemnation of the demonstration, the official Czechoslovak media attacked the secret church as an “illegal church structure” and vilified Čarnogurský and Mikloško as trying to rehabilitate the fascist Tiso state.<sup>77</sup> Despite this negative characterization in the official press, the March 25 demonstration actually helped solidify the standing of the secret church and its more active members, particularly Mikloško and Čarnogurský, in the eyes of many Slovaks. Peter B. recalled that he had never heard of either Mikloško or Čarnogurský prior to the demonstration.<sup>78</sup> In addition to gaining name recognition, the extensive coverage and celebration of the event in the Slovak samizdat press turned the event into “Bratislava’s Good Friday,” an event of great symbolic importance for the Slovak secret church and Slovaks in the following months and years.

The success of the 31-point petition drive is a marker of the secret church’s organizational abilities. The free spaces previously constructed

<sup>73</sup> “Važený pan Peter Colotka,” Košice, 15 April 1988. Vatican Radio broadcasted the text of this letter into Slovakia on May 5, 1988. “Košice Priests Protest to Slovak Premier Against Police Attack,” *SWB*, 13 May 1988.

<sup>74</sup> “Brutální zásah proti shromažďení věřících v Bratislavě,” 29 March 1988, document 14/1988. See Prečan, *Charta 77*, 337–338.

<sup>75</sup> Benda, interview. An article in the April 2, 1988 in Slovak *Pravda* reported that 126 people had been detained by the police following the demonstration. “Bratislava Demonstrations Viewed,” *FBIS*, 7 April 1988, 7.

<sup>76</sup> “Police Break Up Bratislava Church Demonstration,” *FBIS*, 28 March 1988, 9.

<sup>77</sup> For coverage on Czech television see “Church Demonstration Attempted in Bratislava,” *FBIS*, 28 March 1988, 9. See also “Commentary on Demonstration,” *FBIS*, 28 March 1988, 11 and “Bratislava Demonstration Viewed,” *FBIS*, 7 April 1988, 7–9.

<sup>78</sup> Peter B., interview.

by the secret church, particularly pilgrimages, its lay communities and its samizdat network facilitated the rapid collection of signatures. Yet, the party-state's identification of the secret church as an illegal organization and its violent response to the March 25, 1988 demonstration served as a reminder of the extent of the party-state's power and its willingness to use it publicly against activists in the secret church. Grassroots activists in East Germany enjoyed a somewhat different status under the protective cover of the Evangelical Church. For many such groups, by the late 1980s, the church sponsors, rather than the party-state, had become an obstacle to pursuing their interests.

### **Tentative Steps out of the Church's Protective Cover in East Germany**

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Pastor Stephan Bickhardt from East Berlin had developed many contacts in Poland and Czechoslovakia through his involvement in Aktion Sühnezeichen. Inspired by Charter 77 and Václav Benda's concept of building civil society through parallel structures, Bickhardt had founded the samizdat journal *Radix Blätter* in 1985. Bickhardt could have easily published this journal within the protected space of the Evangelical Church using the designation "only for church use." Instead, he chose to use illegal printing equipment hidden in his parents' apartment, explaining that it "came from the idea that man cannot speak of civil society and write from within the church."<sup>79</sup> Bickhardt recognized that the church could contribute to civil society, but also the need for civil society to separate itself from the church. This question of distance from the church that Bickhardt faced with his journal in East Berlin applied to groups throughout the GDR. As an individual, it had not been difficult for Bickhardt to organize this relatively private activity in his parents' apartment. For groups with ten to twenty members, however, organizing activities outside of the church's protective cover posed greater risks and challenges. At the same time, while the Evangelical Church offered protection and opportunities, sponsorship also exposed the groups and their activities to the moderating influence of the church.

During the 1980s, church-sponsored groups in East Germany continued to expand their range of activities with the support and protection of the Evangelical Church, particularly at the local level. While church-

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<sup>79</sup> Bickhardt, interview.

sponsored groups in East Germany had more range for legal activities than the secret church in Slovakia, the nature of their activities were subject to what the church sponsor deemed permissible. As the decade progressed, relations between the groups and their church sponsors sometimes became quite tense, particularly as the interests of the groups evolved and different generations of activists became involved in their activities. In some cases, grassroots groups spent as much time opposing church policy as they did the state's policy. Many of Leipzig's groups began pursuing activities outside of the church's protective cover in order to offer more direct challenges to state power.

Annual events such as the Friedensdekade and the peace seminar represented the backbone of AG Friedensdienst's work in Leipzig, and the introduction of weekly prayer-for-peace services at the Nikolaikirche provided a regular opportunity for the group to promote peace throughout the year. Each of these events took place within the protective cover of the church, but members of AG Friedensdienst also found some opportunities to step outside of the church setting and to advance their interests in secular settings.

In 1984, members of AG Friedensdienst began attending military-political forums in Leipzig in which the SED's official military and peace policies were presented. In April, five members of AG Friedensdienst (including Karl Kamilli and Helmut Nitzsche) joined forty-five people in a forum addressing the question "Is the Atomic War winnable?" Afterwards they prepared a three-page report of this lecture and discussion that took place. This report indicates that the group members actively engaged the military officer hosting the event, the guest lecturer (a professor from a technical school in Leipzig), and the other audience members with pointed statements and questions about the SED's military and peace policies. In the lecture, the speaker blamed all of the wars since 1945 on imperialist nations and declared that anyone who emigrated from the GDR was a traitor of socialism. When the discussion portion of the evening began, one member of AG Friedensdienst returned to the main topic of the forum by asking whether an atomic war could be won, only to receive an unclear answer. According to the report, one audience member midway became frustrated with the group member's questions and the direction of the discussion and declared: "We do not have the right to interfere with the Soviet Union's defense policies, in view of the suffering they endured because of the German fascist army in the Second World War." In direct response to this comment, Karl Kamilli retorted, "I have the right, as a citizen of this land, as a father and as a Christian, to question the defense

policies of the Soviet Union.”<sup>80</sup> Their report explained that they had not attended the forum as a group, meaning that they had not identified themselves as members of AG Friedensdienst during the discussion. AG Friedensdienst as a group did not speak at this forum, but it was certainly the voice of AG Friedensdienst that had been expressed during the discussion.

### **AG Friedensdienst: Between Church Support and Conflict**

Pastor Gröger and the two Superintendent’s strong support of Bächer and Stellmacher following the 1982 peace seminar had demonstrated the willingness of the group’s sponsor and local church leaders to defend their rights as members of a group sponsored by the church. A year later, the church again demonstrated its willingness to defend this group, and again, Heinz Bächer became the focus of the church’s efforts to defend its area of influence from the state. On April 4, 1983, AG Friedensdienst led a service in the Nikolaikirche to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination and to honor his non-violent struggle for social change with a slide presentation about his life and work.<sup>81</sup> Two months earlier, on the day when AG Friedensdienst had agreed to meet in Bächer’s apartment to plan this service, Bächer and his wife came home to discover that an intruder had broken into their apartment. Bächer immediately suspected that this had been a Stasi effort to intimidate him because of his work in AG Friedensdienst. Although a few items had been stolen, such as a set of pewter cups and a clock radio, more valuable items such as a camera and new blue jeans had not been touched. Even more telling was the discovery that his book on Martin Luther King, Jr. had been left open on his desk and his slides for the service had been opened and stacked nearby. He filed a report with the local police but also wrote his own detailed report of the intrusion and submitted it to Pastor Gröger.<sup>82</sup> Gröger responded by stretching the protective cover of the church over Bächer and passed on a copy of the report to Leipzig’s two

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<sup>80</sup> The other members present were Horst Gröger, Brigitte Moritz, and Dagobert Janitzschke. “Bericht über den Besuch eines wehrpolitischen Forums,” 24 April 1984, ABL 22.2.73–75. Bächer explains that the officer’s answers at these forums often revealed how one sided their thinking was. See his notes about these events, ABL 22.2.72.

<sup>81</sup> For the service program and the text of the presentation about King’s life and work, see ABL 22.7.60–67.

<sup>82</sup> “Aktennotiz,” February 9, 1983, Leipzig, PA–HB–AGF Materials. Bächer, interview.

superintendents, the Landeskirche office in Dresden and the Landeskirche's youth pastor along with the following statement: "1. Heinz Bächer belongs to the leadership of AG Friedensdienst of the Evangelical Lutheran Church's Jugendpfarramt in Leipzig. 2. Heinz Bächer conducts his peace work under the commission of the Jugendpfarramt. 3. The description of this incident leaves the impression that this is a malicious [effort] to influence the activities of [AG Friedensdienst]." Gröger concluded by asking the church leadership to investigate this incident with the state further.<sup>83</sup> This effort certainly did not deter Bächer or other members of AG Friedensdienst from their peace work in Leipzig. Pastor Gröger, as before, stood firmly behind the group for which he had assumed responsibility.

In its encounters with state authorities, AG Friedensdienst's relationship with Gröger sometimes became quite tense. Gröger explained that, as the group's sponsor, it was very important to him to be kept informed of the group's work and this produced tensions on several occasions when the group failed to do so to the extent that he had asked. The burden of responsibility for the group's work apparently had increased for Gröger after the 1982 peace seminar. One of the first conflicts occurred in December 1982, when the member of the group who was a Stasi informer (IM-Junge) informed Gröger of the group's plans for the 1983 peace seminar. AG Friedensdienst had only prepared a draft of its invitation to the peace seminar, but apparently the plans outlined in this draft had not yet been discussed with him. In a letter Gröger sent to Heinz Bächer and Helmut Nitzsche, Gröger argued that the Jugendpfarramt had the right to veto any materials printed under its letterhead and that he could not accept the draft of the invitation in its present form. Gröger then invited Bächer and Nitzsche to meet with the Jugendpfarramt in January and requested that "...we would like to have a statement from you about your future relationship at the Jugendpfarramt. Should this statement from you not be possible, then we would like you to request sponsorship from a sympathetic church office."<sup>84</sup> Gröger's letter, threatening the group's association with the Jugendpfarramt, reveals the potential moderating impact that church sponsorship could have on the church-based groups in the GDR. Pastor Gröger, responsible for the Jugendpfarramt and youth ministry in Leipzig, certainly had real, normal concerns about the consequences of the

<sup>83</sup> "Stellungsnahme zur "Aktennotiz" von Heinz Bächer vom 9.2.1983, PA-HB: AGF Materials.

<sup>84</sup> Letter from Gröger to Bächer and Helmut Nitzsche, 15 December 1982, PA-HB.



group's activities. The incident also suggests that the Stasi had used this IM to provoke a conflict between AG Friedensdienst and its sponsor.<sup>85</sup>

The role of AG Friedensdienst and its connection to the Jugendpfarramt was again questioned by Gröger at an April meeting following the 1985 peace seminar. Pastor Gröger and nine members of AG Friedensdienst gathered to evaluate the peace seminar and Evening for Peace that had taken place on March 9 and 10 in Leipzig. The minutes of this meeting indicate that it quickly turned into a heated discussion not only about the peace seminar, but also AG Friedensdienst's impact in Leipzig and its future work and relationship with the Jugendpfarramt. Gröger gave a negative assessment of the peace seminar. He explained that the guest lecture fell flat, the goals of the seminar were unclear, other peace groups in the GDR had not been invited or given a chance to speak, and that attendance had been low. Citing the low attendance, he argued that people had "voted with their feet" against the peace seminar.<sup>86</sup> About sixty people had attended the peace seminar, the lowest attendance of the peace seminars in Leipzig from 1982 to 1985.<sup>87</sup> The meeting minutes, apparently kept by a member of AG Friedensdienst, recorded Gröger's decision:

[For Gröger] the course of the peace seminar had signaled: our group did not shine, did not result in anything, and was not fit for work. "The Jugendpfarramt should not lend its name for such things. I would like to dissolve this union." (Between the Jugendpfarramt and AG Friedensdienst.) [Gröger] is no longer willing to risk his neck for the group "through discussions at the town hall"... He has youth work to lead here and the older age of our group is out of place [at the Jugendpfarramt.] In closing, he asked the group to look for another church sponsor. "Then the peace work in Leipzig can finally begin."

While one group member acknowledged that the 1985 peace seminar had not gone as well as expected in the discussion that followed, others argued that Gröger himself had hindered the group's development and that things would be better without him. Horst Gröger challenged Pastor Gröger's premise for evaluating the group's impact and his request to end

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<sup>85</sup> Looking at this incident after 1989, Bächer viewed the IM as having used Gröger to gain information about other group members and then used the relationship with Gröger against the group. Bächer, interview. One goal of IMs was to create divisions within the groups they informed on. Joppke, *East German Dissidents*, 113–114.

<sup>86</sup> "Gedächtnisprotokoll: Treff der AG Friedensdienst 2.4.85, 19.30," SLWA: 6.4, Frieden, 1983–1985.

<sup>87</sup> Bächer, interview.

the Jugendpfarramt's sponsorship. According to the text of the minutes: "[Horst Gröger] found it completely incomprehensible how a decisive judgement regarding the peace seminar could be made based on poor attendance. Since when has mass participation represented evidence of quality? It is no longer 1982–83 when peace was the big fashion. And [if participation is important], our group's initiatives, such as the aid packages for Ethiopia, had a positive response." Gröger, who had joined AG Friedensdienst in 1982 in the midst of the blossoming of peace initiatives in the GDR at that time, recognized that the group had worked for peace before it had become "the big fashion" and that it had continued to do so afterwards. During the remainder of the meeting, the group discussed its past work, such as its successful introduction of the Friedensdekade to Leipzig and decided that there was still much that it could do in Leipzig. Superintendent Magirius had recently proposed establishing a local committee within the church to sponsor Leipzig's groups, and AG Friedensdienst concluded the meeting with the decision to move the group from the Jugendpfarramt to Magirius' new organization.<sup>88</sup> The tension between AG Friedensdienst and its church sponsor had stemmed from different evaluations of how the group could broaden its membership and promote peace in Leipzig. It suggests the considerable implicit pressure Pastor Gröger felt from local party-state officials. Most members of AG Friedensdienst interviewed for this project acknowledged that Pastor Gröger was under pressure from local party-state officials and frequently had to appear before them in city hall.<sup>89</sup> AG Friedensdienst resolved this issue simply by finding a new sponsor in Superintendent Magirius.

Despite the constraints that came with church sponsorship, AG Umweltschutz's development and activities between 1981 and 1989 reveal that the Evangelical Church continued to offer a space where groups could advance their interests independent of state control. In an approach similar to that of Aktion Sühnezeichen's summer camps, AG Umweltschutz organized activities that promoted environmental protection through action and education. Its two earliest initiatives, "Mobile without an Auto" (or "Car-Free") and "Operation Tree Planting," illustrate this dual focus and the group's close affiliation with the Evangelical Church. The Evangelical Church's environmental research center in Wittenberg had developed both of these as GDR-wide initiatives in 1981, but it relied on local environmental groups such as AG Umweltschutz to introduce them at the local level.

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<sup>88</sup> "Gedächtnisprotokoll: Treff der AG Friedensdienst 2.4.85, 19:30."

<sup>89</sup> Gröger recalled these many visits. Gröger, interview.

“Mobile Without an Auto,” the first weekend of every June, was a bicycle-protest against pollution-causing methods of transportation. At these events in 1981 and 1982, the participants, usually young people, met at a church in Leipzig for an opening service. They then rode their bicycles en masse for one to two hours to a church in a town outside of Leipzig where they attended a lecture and discussion on some environmental theme. There was also singing and special programs for children and a closing service for all participants.<sup>90</sup> In 1983, the activity became a two-day event with time set aside to care for trees and plants along a pre-selected street, additional services at the church, folk music, and even pony rides and puppet theater for children. Approximately eighty people met with shovels to tend to trees and plants along one of Leipzig’s streets and about 400 young people participated in that year’s bicycle trip the following day.<sup>91</sup> In 1985, “Mobile Without an Auto” was celebrated as the final event of an environmental week in June that included a series of seminars and four evenings of “Prayer for the Creation” services at the Nikolaikirche.<sup>92</sup>

AG Umweltschutz introduced its other main initiative, “Operation Tree Planting,” in October 1981. An estimated 250 people from all over the GDR met at the Michaeliskirche in Leipzig for a lecture and group discussion about the value of life and nature on a Friday evening. The next day 120 participants spent the day planting trees along a designated street in Leipzig. Pastor Gröger and a member of AG Umweltschutz had negotiated and received permission to do this from the director of the city nursery. At the end of the workday, the participants returned to the Michaeliskirche for an evening of presentations, discussion, and prayer. The event then concluded Sunday morning with a special youth service at the Michaeliskirche, attended by about 250 people. Similar events had been organized in Rostock (attended by 130 participants), Schwerin (150 participants), and Neustrelitz (70 participants) that same weekend.<sup>93</sup> Each of

<sup>90</sup> “Aktion Mobil Ohne Auto in Leipzig,” *Streiflichter* 6 (May 1982): 2.

<sup>91</sup> “Mobil Ohne Auto” (June 4–5, 1983), SGML: posters. For Ralf Elsässer’s account of the 1983 event, see “Mobil ohne Auto—ein Kommentar,” *Streiflichter* 17 (June 1983): 1. By 1984, AG Umweltschutz expanded the activities to three days, from Friday evening to Sunday evening, and began publicizing the event at least six months in advance. “Mobil ohne Auto, 01.-03. Juni 1984,” *Streiflichter* 23 (January 1984): 2.

<sup>92</sup> “Lebensräume Umweltwoche ’85,” SGML: posters.

<sup>93</sup> For the invitation describing the planned activities see ABL 2.1.1. The poster publicizing the event also lists the main activities. “23.-25. Okt. Mit dem Spaten zur Baumpflanzaktion,” SGML: posters. The first issue of *Streiflichter* in November 1981 presented an ac-

these annual initiatives in Leipzig informed participants about environmental issues and organized activities in which the participants could demonstrate their commitment to the environment through action. Religious services and prayers represented a central element of each initiative and framed the religious context of the group's work for the environment in Leipzig.

AG Umweltschutz promoted environmental protection through a wide variety of other activities in Leipzig during the 1980s. In 1982, the group led its own prayer-for-peace services at the Nikolaikirche during the Friedensdekade.<sup>94</sup> That year the prayer-for-peace services became a weekly event and AG Umweltschutz took turns leading the services with AG Friedensdienst and other church-based groups in Leipzig. A 1986 *Streiflichter* article described the importance for AG Umweltschutz of the weekly prayer-for-peace services at the Nikolaikirche: "It is a good opportunity to bring our common concerns and petitions before God in prayer; to find new comrades-in-arms through this means of 'public work'; and to become acquainted with colleagues who serve in the [other] working groups."<sup>95</sup> AG Umweltschutz also organized several special projects to promote environmental protection. In September 1988, AG Umweltschutz began collecting signatures on behalf of Greenpeace to support a declaration issued by that international group calling for the protection of Antarctica's environment and wildlife. Within a year the group had collected 1,638 signatures.<sup>96</sup> AG Umweltschutz also organized initiatives that addressed problems with Leipzig's urban environment. In the summer of 1986, members of AG Umweltschutz began compiling a catalog of trees along Leipzig's streets. Using a ratings system, they recorded the number and condition of bushes and trees along every street in the city. The initiative was organized in conjunction with the city nursery, which provided precise directions on how to rate each section of street.<sup>97</sup> In a similar initiative two years later, AG Umweltschutz produced a three-volume report evaluating Leipzig's streets and their accessibility to bicyclists and sent copies to Leipzig's mayor, the city's transportation authorities, the police,

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count of this event. *Streiflichter* 1 (November 1981): 1–2. See also Kaufmann, *Sorget nicht*, 153–156.

<sup>94</sup> Kaufmann, *Sorget nicht*, 181–183.

<sup>95</sup> *Streiflichter* 37 (July 1986): 2.

<sup>96</sup> *Streiflichter* 47 (20 September 1988): 5–10. In September 1989, *Streiflichter* 1,000 of the total 1,638 signatures collected to date had already been sent to Greenpeace. *Streiflichter* 55 (11 September 1989): 12.

<sup>97</sup> UBL: C-RAY-11.

and other authorities. The report evaluated every stretch of road in Leipzig, identifying problems and safety concerns for bicyclists. The report included photographs to illustrate particular problems and suggested various ways to make the streets more accessible to bicyclists.<sup>98</sup>

AG Umweltschutz's organization exceeded that of any other church-based group in Leipzig, and it had become one of the largest and most active environmental groups in the GDR. By the late 1980s, nine project groups existed within AG Umweltschutz, and each group addressed different aspects of environmental protection in Leipzig such as air quality, water quality, the condition and number of trees in the city, as well as environmental aspects of building construction. In August 1989, AG Umweltschutz distributed 1,000 copies of a two-page information sheet listing each project group and the name and address of the contact person for each group.<sup>99</sup> *Streiflichter* helped coordinate and publicize the activities of the different project groups, and its breadth of information and circulation increased significantly.

Both AG Friedensdienst and AG Umweltschutz began their work within Leipzig's Jugendpfarramt at about the same time in 1981, and they both used this sponsorship to organize activities that promoted peace or environmental issues in the GDR. AG Umweltschutz, however, used its church-sponsorship to organize and expand its activities in Leipzig to a greater extent than AG Friedensdienst had by the end of the 1980s. Generational and background differences of its members may have contributed to this disparity. AG Umweltschutz had been founded by a group of theology students with little previous experience in grassroots activism, but with enthusiasm to build a structure in Leipzig dedicated to environmentalism. AG Friedensdienst had been founded out of a core of former Bausoldaten who had been active since the late 1960s. Until the arrival of Heinz Bächer, these former Bausoldaten had in many ways been satisfied with their meetings in private apartments. They were quite excited about the new possibilities that came with church sponsorship. When Bächer completed his theological training and moved to Jena in 1985 to begin his parish work, however, the group lost a key source of its momentum. AG Friedensdienst's leadership remained under the dedicated, but cautious

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<sup>98</sup> AG Umweltschutz, *Radverkehr in Leipzig—Zustand, Probleme und Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten aus der Sicht der Radfahrer* (Leipzig, 1988), UBL: C-VE4-8/1. *Streiflichter* later published a brief overview of the report. *Streiflichter* 56 (30 October 1989): 10–11.

<sup>99</sup> ABL 2.1.13.

leadership of this Bausoldaten core after 1985. By relying on the personality of Bächer, rather than building an organizational structure, AG Friedensdienst's activities did not expand and develop to the extent that AG Umweltschutz did in the later half of the 1980s.

The activities planned by AG Friedensdienst and AG Umweltschutz, however, appear quite moderate in comparison to those organized by AG Menschenrechte (Working Group for Human Rights), AK Gerechtigkeit (Working Group for Justice) and IG Leben (Initiative Group for Life).<sup>100</sup> Formed in Leipzig in 1987, these new groups were more politically-oriented and aggressive than the groups that had developed earlier within the Jugendpfarramt. Several factors shaped the aggressive character of their work. Of foremost importance was the installation of Pastor Christoph Wonneberger at the Lukaskirche in Leipzig in 1985. In contrast to Leipzig's Superintendents (Magirius and Richter) and Pastor Gröger, Pastor Wonneberger, who was renowned for introducing the Social Peace Service initiative in Dresden in 1982, had few qualms about using the church and its resources to promote political issues. Pastor Wonneberger's leadership inspired and propelled the formation of these new groups. Oliver Kloß, a member of AK Gerechtigkeit and AG Menschenrechte, argued that Pastor Wonneberger was the most important person for the groups in Leipzig and that he contributed to the political direction of the groups. Kloß, who came to Leipzig to study at the theological seminary in 1983, had mixed views about the role of the church leadership. Though recognizing the importance of Wonneberger and acknowledging that the church effectively supported such groups, he felt that other church leaders in Leipzig were sometimes more concerned with preserving their own position and privileges.<sup>101</sup> The young age of their membership also appears to have contributed to their willingness to take greater risks. Many were students at the theological seminary in Leipzig and did not yet have families. Gisela Nitzsche, wife of AG Friedensdienst member Helmut Nitzsche, offered this generational difference as one reason these new groups could take greater risks. "We had children!" she explained.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>100</sup> For brief descriptions of these three groups, see Dietrich, *Freunde und Feinde*, 496–503.

<sup>101</sup> Oliver Kloß, interview by author, Leipzig, Germany, 30 October 2001. Jochen Läßig, who helped found AK Gerechtigkeit, described Pastor Wonneberger as the most politically-oriented church leader in Leipzig. Jochen Läßig, interview by author, Leipzig, Germany, 6 November 2001.

<sup>102</sup> Gisela Nitzsche, interview.

AG Menschenrechte, founded by Pastor Wonneberger in 1987, worked to achieve the Social Peace Service initiative that Wonneberger had introduced as an alternative to armed military service in 1982. Its members also established a samizdat library and distribution center in Leipzig. Once a month members of church-based groups from all over the GDR met at the Lukaskirche to exchange or purchase samizdat publications or books.<sup>103</sup> The group later published two issues of its own samizdat periodical called *Forum für Kirche und Menschenrechte* in the fall of 1989.<sup>104</sup>

AK Gerechtigkeit, founded by Jochen Läßig and other students from the theological seminary in Leipzig in 1987, hoped to influence the GDR's political development. The group had contact with the political opposition in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Baltic republics, and like the movements in those countries, it developed a formal structure with organizational guidelines that designated spokespersons and coordinated the work of several committees that addressed specific issues. Though sponsored by the Evangelical Church and receiving support from Pastor Wonneberger, this group also used unlicensed (non-church) printing equipment to produce many of its materials. In contrast to most other church-based groups in Leipzig, AK Gerechtigkeit was a relatively closed group. Attendance at its meetings was restricted to members.<sup>105</sup>

IG Leben, founded in the summer of 1987 by several of AG Umweltschutz's more politically-oriented members, represented the more radical wing of environmentalism in Leipzig. Its thirty members connected ecological demands with political reforms. IG Leben also developed several committees to address a broad range of social and political issues, such as ecology, Nicolae Ceaușescu's policies in Romania, military service questions, civil rights, and perestroika. This group had a relatively weak association with the Evangelical Church, and many of its meetings took place in private apartments.<sup>106</sup>

IG Leben, AK Gerechtigkeit, and AG Menschenrechte walked a delicate line between the protective cover of the Evangelical Church and the greater risks of activity in the public and private sphere. By distancing themselves from the church to a greater extent than earlier groups such as

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<sup>103</sup> Kloß, interview.

<sup>104</sup> For copies of the two issues see the holdings of ABL and UBL.

<sup>105</sup> "Erklärung zur Arbeitsweise des AKG," February 1988, ABL 2.3.1. See also Dietrich, *Freunde und Feinde*, 498–499.

<sup>106</sup> "Initiativegruppe Leben—Leipzig," January 1989, ABL 2.2.28. See also Dietrich, *Freunde und Feinde*, 502–503.

AG Friedensdienst and AG Umweltschutz, they introduced a more actively political element to grassroots activity in Leipzig. Prior to the fall of 1989, these more politically-active groups organized public activities that increasingly attempted to shift the sphere of independent activity from the church to the streets. These initiatives challenged the state's control over East German society and also the Evangelical Church's ability to oversee and moderate the activities of the groups that it sponsored.

The first of these initiatives protested the high level of pollution of the Pleiße River in Leipzig. In response to the smell from its pollution, city-planners years earlier had directed the flow of this small river into underground channels through Leipzig. IG Leben and AK Gerechtigkeit organized a demonstration to march along the remaining above-ground portions of the river on Sunday, June 5, 1988. The groups did not want the church involved in this demonstration, and they did not involve the church in the planning. Three days before the event Superintendents Magirius and Richter distanced themselves from the demonstration and told the pastors in their districts not to allow information about it to be displayed in their churches. IG Leben's members publicized the event by distributing and posting flyers in public areas around the city. Approximately 240 people participated in what became known as the Pleiße March. The police observed and photographed the march, but did not intervene. Pastor Wonneberger was the only church leader to participate. Reflecting the distance between the church and this demonstration, it was reportedly not discussed at the prayer-for-peace service on the following day. A second march—the Pleiße Pilgrimage—was organized the following year.<sup>107</sup> Tobias Hollitzer, an environmental activist in Leipzig, recalled that the party-state had even tried (unsuccessfully) to get Superintendents Magirius and Richter to take responsibility for the march.<sup>108</sup>

Members of IG Leben and AK Gerechtigkeit again took their activities outside of the church on January 15, 1989 on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the death of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. They asked citizens not to take part in the official commemoration of these famous Social Democrats, but rather to assemble at 4:00 p.m. in the market square in front of the old town hall in Leipzig's center: "Let us take joint action for the right of freedom of expression of one's opinion, for freedom of assembly and freedom of association, and for freedom of the press and against the ban of the *Sputnik* periodical and critical Soviet

<sup>107</sup> "Initiativegruppe Leben—Leipzig," January 1989, ABL 2.2.28.

<sup>108</sup> Hollitzer, "Eine Hoffnung lernt gehen," 96–97.



films.”<sup>109</sup> Honecker, like the political leaders in Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria, had resisted Gorbachev’s policies of glasnost and perestroika. The SED had banned Soviet periodicals (such as the youth periodical *Sputnik*) and films that reflected the political liberalization taking place in the Soviet Union.

IG Leben and AK Gerechtigkeit publicized this demonstration by putting out 5,000 leaflets explaining these demands in mailboxes throughout the city. The police arrested eleven of the organizers in the three days prior to the demonstration, including Jochen Läßig, Uwe Schwabe, Rainer Müller, and Michael Arnold. By 2:30 p.m. on January 15 the police had sealed off the market square, but at 4:00 p.m. an estimated 700 people gathered around the corner. A member of IG Leben managed to read a statement protesting the arrest of members of IG Leben and AK Gerechtigkeit and announcing the necessity of freedom of assembly, association, and the press within socialism before the police broke up the event and arrested eighty of the participants.<sup>110</sup> The following day, Superintendents Magirius and Richter responded to this demonstration by issuing a statement to all of the parish offices in Leipzig: “The message of the Church is and remains connected to the unalterable message of Christ Jesus... For us, therefore, a political demonstration cannot be an appropriate method of the Church’s mission.” With this statement, Superintendents Magirius and Richter distanced themselves from public and political demonstrations. However, they did show sympathy for those arrested by including a list of the names of the men and women who had been arrested and requested that prayers be said on their behalf during the services.<sup>111</sup>

On June 10, 1989, members of AK Gerechtigkeit and IG Leben organized a Street Music Festival as a public event separate from the Evangelical Church. Jochen Läßig, the principal organizer of this festival, explained that he and a group of six to ten members of AK Gerechtigkeit had begun organizing the festival six months earlier. He publicized it at the environmental library in Leipzig and with flyers in the street several days beforehand.<sup>112</sup> One of these flyers, signed simply “Street Musicians and Friends,” explained the festival’s goals: “We want singing and per-

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<sup>109</sup> This appeal was signed simply “Initiative for Democratic Renewal of our Society.” See “Aufruf an alle Bürger der Stadt Leipzig,” January 1989, ABL 1.15.1.

<sup>110</sup> “Leipzig den 15.1.1989,” IG Leben, 15 January 1989, ABL 1.15.6.

<sup>111</sup> ABL 1.15.12.

<sup>112</sup> Läßig, interview.

formances and dancing in our streets, and not only on Whitsunday or on May Day or at Christmas. If only the sound of instruments and people's voices could be heard through the streets on some nice spring day or on a warm summer evening."<sup>113</sup> Läßig and the other organizers intended the Street Music Festival as an all day event with musicians and theater groups performing in the city center.<sup>114</sup> The festival began at 11:00 a.m. on June 10, despite the local authorities' refusal to approve the organizers official request for the event. For over two hours, fifteen musicians and theater groups entertained an estimated 1,000 people before plainclothes and uniformed police officers intervened. The police arrested about 140 people, and several accounts report that some people escaped arrest by running into the Thomaskirche, located in the same square as the festival.<sup>115</sup>

The Pleiße marches, the Liebknecht-Luxemburg demonstration, and the Street Music Festival succeeded in organizing public open activity outside of the space of the Evangelical Church and without its organizational support. Though not challenging socialism, the organizers of each event implicitly addressed political issues such as the state's poor treatment of the environment or freedoms of press and assembly. The Street Music Festival represented more than just music, but rather the right of citizens to meet in a public space for some activity independent of state or even church control. Though members of church-based groups in Leipzig had been the primary organizers of each event, in particular members of IG Leben and AK Gerechtigkeit, they had done so without the Evangelical Church's approval or support. Each event had been publicized without the support of the Evangelical Church's publishing resources or distribution network. The arrests at the Liebknecht-Luxemburg demonstration and the Street Music Festival illustrated the limits and dangers involved in this type of open public activity.

<sup>113</sup> "Leipziger Straßenmusikfestival 1989 am 10. Juni im Stadtzentrum," ABL 1.21.1.

<sup>114</sup> "Einladung zum Leipziger Straßenmusikfestival 1989 10. Juni im Stadtzentrum," ABL 1.21.2.

<sup>115</sup> IG Leben produced a written account of the festival and the police intervention. See "1. Leipziger Straßenmusikfestival 10. Juni 1989," ABL 1.21.4. For the account of Tobias Hollitzer, who observed the festival and was questioned by the police, see ABL 1.21.8. Afterwards, the organizers prepared a thirty-eight page bound booklet documenting the festival with photos of both performers and police intervention, an account of the event and its organization, as well as copies of police fines given to those arrested. See *Straßenmusikfestival im Leipziger Stadtzentrum: Documentation, Berichte, Fotos vom 10. Juni 1989*. ABL has a photocopy of this volume (ABL 1.21.15), but the UBL has a full-color original version.

## Summary

In the shift toward increasingly political oppositional activity amongst Slovak Catholics and East German Protestants in the 1980s, activists in each country began pursuing their efforts in more open and public venues, outside the protected spaces of the secret church and church-sponsored groups. The 1,100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of St. Methodius helped inspire Slovak Catholics to challenge the party-state and transform the pilgrimage tradition into a public space for believers. The commemoration of a similar religious anniversary in East Germany—the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Martin Luther's birth in 1983—does not figure into the grassroots activism of Leipzig (or groups in any other East German city). The state's interest in Luther as a national cultural symbol certainly strengthened the Evangelical Church's position in the GDR and its ability to support groups like AG Friedensdienst and AG Umweltschutz. The members of AG Friedensdienst, however, had a greater interest in the work of Martin Luther King, Jr. than in that of Martin Luther. In 1983, rather than organizing activities to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Martin Luther's birth, they had commemorated the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination. A few of its members were Catholic or Baptist, so the group had an identity defined by its peace work, rather than by Lutheranism. While Christian belief was at the center of their peace work, spiritual development was not its goal. Rather, they employed religious belief in their work for peace.

From an internal point of view, by the 1980s, the Slovak secret church had the organization and resources to mobilize and support a greater presence in the public sphere. Through its samizdat network and network of communities, it was able to mobilize attendance at pilgrimages, collect signatures for a petition, and draw attendance at an officially-banned demonstration. The secret church's mobilizations, despite the extensive resources of the Slovak secret church, would have been quite difficult without external developments such as the election of Pope John Paul II in 1978 and Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of glasnost and perestroika after 1985. Pope John Paul II gave moral support to Slovak Catholics and inspired a religious revival in Slovakia in the 1980s that renewed interest in the pilgrimage tradition. Gorbachev's policies, which Husák's leadership resisted, encouraged Slovaks to realize that it was their own political leadership, rather than the Soviet Union, that was preventing glasnost and perestroika from being introduced in Czechoslovakia. These external factors are particularly important because they affected both Slovaks belonging to the secret church and those who did

not belong to it. This influence was important because each of the Slovak secret church's most successful engagements in the public sphere—the pilgrimages with their night programs, the 31-point petition, and the March 25 demonstration—received the support of Slovaks who were not members of the secret church.

The popularity of these activities reveals that the work of the secret church converged with the activities of the official Catholic Church and also with the concerns of Slovaks interested in anti-Communist issues. Three types of participation in the secret church's activities developed in Slovakia. The first includes Catholics who belonged to the secret church. This includes everyone from the secret church's spiritual leaders, such as Bishop Korec and Sylvester Krčméry who did not have official status in the church hierarchy, to Catholics who belonged to one of the secret church's communities. The faith of these Catholics, however, did not remain confined to the spaces constructed by the secret church. As explained in chapter 2, Bishop Korec emphasized that the secret church was only the submerged portion of a single Catholic Church lead by the Pope. Therefore, the members of the secret church may have attended pilgrimages or even traditional services conducted by official priests. The second type of participation refers to Catholics who did not belong to the secret church, but who supported the secret church's activities in some manner. Again, this includes a range, such as Cardinal Tomášek who offered official support to many of the secret church's activities to Catholics who attended night programs at pilgrimages, signed a petition or participated in the March 1988 demonstration. The final category includes non-Catholics and even nonbelievers, who were drawn to the broader issues of human rights and civil freedoms that many of the secret church's activities supported. These individuals would include those who signed the 31-point petition or attended the March 25, 1988 demonstration.

Although the East German state may have viewed the Kirchenbund as a partner in its peace efforts, AG Friedensdienst's encounters with the local authorities indicate that the state did not hold such a view of the peace groups sponsored by local congregations. For example, in his sermon at the first peace seminar in 1982, Heinz Bäcker had spoken of the importance of disarmament in general. In principle, AG Friedensdienst promoted disarmament on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Leipzig's local authorities did not try to co-opt his sermon for the GDR's official peace campaign and report that he had only called for disarmament in the West. Instead, the authorities put a different spin to his sermon and used the opportunity to crackdown on him by accusing him of speaking about disarmament among the Warsaw Pact countries. The party-state's efforts

against Bächer were unsuccessful due to the intervention of local church leaders. Yet, the other side of this protection was the church leadership's ability to moderate and limit more oppositional activity of grassroots groups. The arrival of Pastor Wonneberger in Leipzig inspired the creation of more oppositional groups, but such groups could only come about with a church sponsor willing to shoulder that burden against the state. The Pleiße marches, the Liebknecht-Luxemburg demonstration, and the Street Music Festival, like the March 25, 1988 Good Friday Demonstration in Bratislava, were more politically-oppositional in nature. For the first time, expressions of protest in Leipzig were not moderated by the church hierarchy in the way they had been. The organizers had found greater freedom to be oppositional outside of the Church's protective cover. Many church-sponsored groups and activists often found themselves in conflict with the more moderate clergy. Catholic activists had had this greater freedom of movement as part of an illegal secret church in Slovakia and found in the 1980s that high levels of the Church hierarchy—such as Cardinal Tomášek—had become willing to support their mobilization campaigns.

The secret church's petition efforts in the late 1980s indicate that Slovaks Catholics had become empowered to challenge the state on religious issues. Many politically-oriented Catholics in the secret church—primarily Ján Čarnogurský—saw demands for religious freedom as critiques of the political system. The rationale for signing a petition or attending a demonstration presented by many participants suggests that they had come to view politics and religion as separate. For those activists, addressing abortion policy or making demands for religious freedom was a religious, rather than a political issue. As the party-state's policy toward religion had not really changed in the 1980s, the rationale of Slovak Catholics supporting the initiatives speaks to the persistence of religious-based motives. For non-Catholics, particularly those who observed the March 1988 demonstration in Bratislava, the violent response of the police against the demonstrators had an "awakening" effect. Recall Peter B.'s surprise to see the violence against people who did not appear to be doing anything political. Whether it is "empowering" or "awakening," the result was a politicization of the involved populations. In Leipzig, the grassroots groups had pursued both goals in its efforts to inform and educate the population. A distinction with the Slovak case relates to the question of whether the clergy who sponsored grassroots groups were becoming empowered or politicized to take a more critical position against the party-state. In Leipzig, Pastor Wonneberger was in the minority of those

within the church who had adopted a more politicized position before the late 1980s. In an oral history project, Pastor Klaus Kaden in Leipzig pointed to the party-state's manipulation of the May 7, 1989 local election results as an important "awakening" and politicizing moment for East German citizens. For the first time, election committees of citizens monitored the counting at polling stations and discovered that the official final totals for the party slate were 15–20 percent higher than what had been observed.<sup>116</sup> Pastor Kaden was particularly critical of the Church, including himself, for being "unpolitical." He explains, "None of us [clergy] went to prison and were released as possible spokespersons of the reform, like Václav Havel or others. Now we have to come to terms with the consequences. We have to look at what happened to us, as individuals *and* as a church."<sup>117</sup> Pastor Kaden's discussion of Christian responsibility, particularly for the clergy, in the late GDR period recalls Lothar Kreyssig's impetus to found Aktion Sühnezeichen three decades earlier to atone for Christian passivity in response to Nazism.

While the shift toward protests demonstrated the political potential of religious-dissent, it also exposed the limits of the free spaces that had been constructed in religious arenas in Slovakia and East Germany. Many clergy within the Evangelical Church—which had benefitted as an institution from its special relationship with the party-state—tried to exert a moderating influence on the more oppositional aspects of grassroots activity. As a result, a more complex dynamic of oppositional activity emerged in East Germany that resembled the three points of a triangle. The church-sponsored/grassroots groups were located on one point of the triangle. The Evangelical Church and the party-state were located on the second and third points. As Heinz Bäcker's encounters with the party-state illustrated, church sponsors could exert strong support for grassroots activism against the face of state power. However, by setting boundaries for permissible activity within the church-sponsored spaces, grassroots activists could find their oppositional activities directed at the church sponsors as much as it was directed against the party-state. As has been discussed, neither the Evangelical Church in East Germany nor the Catholic Church in Slovakia was a monolith and levels of support for grassroots initiatives varied amongst the clergy in both countries. However, in Slovakia, the shift toward more oppositional activity remained largely a two-sided affair between the secret church activists and the party-state. The secret church, as

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<sup>116</sup> Philipsen, *We Were the People*, 155.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

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the submerged or underground portion of the Catholic Church, directed its opposition toward the party-state and the party-state reciprocated. Even as more politically-oppositional activities emerged from within the secret church, those initiatives remained directed at the party-state, but never against the church, even though many Slovak priests were not aligned with the secret church. Often, the highest members of the church hierarchy, in particular Cardinal Tomášek, supported the oppositional initiatives of the secret church.





## CHAPTER 6

# Archipelagos of Grassroots Activism

In September 1989, three sociologists in Bratislava, Martin Bútora, Vladimír Krivý, and Soňa Szomolányiová, prepared a paper examining what they described as the phenomena of “Islands of Positive Deviation” in Czechoslovakia in the late 1980s. Two months later, the authors put aside their work on the article when they became active members of Public Against Violence during the Velvet Revolution. The analysis outlined in the unfinished draft of the article illustrates the success, potential and remaining problems facing Slovak social movements in the final years of Communism. The authors explained that “positive deviants,” instead of responding to existing conditions with passive resignation or helplessness, pursue an alternative formula for life, one that opposes the accepted norms and is oriented toward reforming or changing the existing conditions. Like-minded positive deviants who join together then form “islands of positive deviation,” a metaphor to reflect the fact that they may remain isolated from other such islands. In order to overcome the isolation of these islands for such a change, the authors argued the necessity of constructing a network of communication among the individual islands to create “the appearance of an entire archipelago of positive deviations.”<sup>1</sup> Though making no reference to the secret church, Bútora and the other authors refer to writer Dominik Tatarka and the environmentalists as examples of positive deviation in Slovakia. The Slovak secret church had in fact become an important island of positive deviation in Czechoslovakia by the 1980s. Through its community structure and samizdat network, the Slovak secret church had created important networks among its members. These networks accounted for the

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<sup>1</sup> Manuscript provided to author by Martin Bútora. Bútora et al., “Positive Deviation,” 8.

success of the Slovak secret church's ability to function as a religious movement independent of state control and facilitated its engagement with the state in the 1980s through its demands for greater religious freedom. The networks linking these communities made the secret church itself a single, but relatively isolated "archipelago of positive deviation."

In East Germany, the structure of church-sponsorship facilitated contacts and networks between grassroots groups pursuing different interests. In Leipzig, the Jugendpfarramt had served as a critical organizational link between the church-sponsored groups and the shared use of the weekly prayer-for-peace services in the Nikolaikirche, whose planning was rotated amongst the grassroots groups further helped the various groups coordinate and publicize their concerns. By the mid-1980s, tensions between the groups and their church sponsors led to increased centralization of the city's grassroots groups under church control. While further limiting and defining the range of permissible activities, their activities became more integrated with stronger networks defining their relationship to one another. Even as some of Leipzig's newer and more radical groups began leaving the church's protective cover in the late 1980s, pre-existing ties with the church kept these groups within Leipzig's own archipelago of activity. This chapter examines the building of ties and the consolidation of networks between different streams of independent activity in Slovakia and East Germany.

### **Streams of Independent Activity in Slovakia**

Several distinct streams of independent activity, in addition to the secret church, existed in Slovakia by the end of the 1980s. Each successfully overcame the Communist party's efforts to restrict society, and a small portion of the membership of these streams of independent activity also began shifting their orientation towards the political opposition by November 1989. As these activists became politically engaged, they began establishing contact and networks with one another. These networks played a critical role in the success of the broad-based movement Public Against Violence during the 1989 Velvet Revolution.

Over a decade earlier, a small group of individuals in Slovakia had become engaged with civil or political opposition to the regime. Miroslav Kusý and Milan Šimečka were at the center of this stream of political activity. Miroslav Kusý had been the only person living in Slovakia

to sign Charter 77 in 1977.<sup>2</sup> Ivan Hoffman and other politically-oriented Slovaks met with Šimečka and Kusý every Sunday to play chess and talk about the political situation in Slovakia. This small group usually gathered in the Šimečka garden or home. One of the politically oriented Slovaks recalled that Ivan Hoffman, who was sending commentary on the situation in Slovakia to Radio Free Europe, would bring texts of his reports to these informal meetings for discussion and debate.<sup>3</sup> A separate Slovak branch of Charter 77 did not exist, so the activities of this small group of politically thinking individuals in Slovakia were largely oriented toward Prague.<sup>4</sup>

An environmental movement represented another stream of independent activity in Slovakia. It was rooted in the 'Slovak Union of Nature and Landscape Protectors' which had been formed in 1969 and walked a fine line between official and unofficial activity. Beginning in the late 1970s, Bratislava Branch #6 of this union became the most active in Slovakia. Mikuláš Huba, a member of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, led this branch. It opposed the Gabčíkovo dam project on the Danube River, fought for the protection of historic Devin castle and its environmental surroundings from development, and campaigned against the state's removal of crosses from a historic cemetery in Bratislava in 1981.<sup>5</sup> Huba published a newsletter titled *Nature Protector* with information about the activities and aims of the union in Bratislava, as well as "supplements," usually statements from annual meetings or other documents. As a union recognized by the state, these publications, intended only for union members, could be legally published without official approval.<sup>6</sup> In September 1987, Huba and Ján Budaj, who had joined the union in the early 1980s, edited and published 1,000 copies of a seventy-five-page supplement to the annual report. Titled *Bratislava nahlas*, a reference to Gorbachev's policy of glasnost or openness, it criticized

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<sup>2</sup> Milan Šimečka was ethnically Czech, but lived in Slovakia and wrote in both Slovak and Czech. Other Slovak signatories of Charter 77, such as Dominik Tatarka and Ján Mlynárik, resided in Prague. Milan Šimečka delayed signing Charter 77 so that his son Martin would be able to get a university education. Even before signing Charter 77, Šimečka was politically active with Kusý in Slovakia. Kusý, interview.

<sup>3</sup> M., interview by author, Bratislava, Slovakia, 18 August 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Kusý, interview.

<sup>5</sup> Mikuláš Huba, interview by author, Bratislava, Slovakia, 19 August 1997. For an extensive discussion of the volunteer conservation of Branch #6, see Snajdr, *Nature Protests*, chapter 2.

<sup>6</sup> Huba, interview.

the state of Bratislava's physical and social environment. This collective work of over a hundred experts from the Slovak Academy of Sciences and other scientific, cultural, and educational institutions in Slovakia reported high levels of air, water, and soil pollution in Bratislava. Demonstrating the union's ability to make broader critiques under the label "environmentalism," the report also documented problems in Bratislava's social environment such as the high suicide rate and the small number of theaters.<sup>7</sup>

The literary and artistic underground formed another stream of independent activity. Individuals who were involved in the production of samizdat literature, such as Martin Šimečka, Hana Ponická, and Dominik Tatarka, as well as visual artists who were forbidden to publish or exhibit their work officially belonged to this stream. Many of these individuals held regular jobs, such as teachers. Through their art or their writing they existed in the underground. Martin Šimečka explained that it "was just a group of people who thought about themselves more in terms of art than politics."<sup>8</sup> Finally, a Hungarian movement led by Miklós Duray worked to expand the cultural and political rights of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia.

Contact between the activists of these different streams developed to a limited extent during the 1980s. Martin Šimečka was involved with his father's political activities and later became involved with Charter 77. In the 1980s, he helped edit several samizdat journals with both a literary and political orientation, including *Kontakt* (1980–1983), *K* (1986–1987), and later *Fragment K* (1988–1991). He co-edited the first two of these publications with his close friend Ján Budaj, the environmental activist.<sup>9</sup> Kusý and Šimečka also attended literary meetings with Hana Ponická held about four times a year either at Kusý's apartment or some cottage.<sup>10</sup> Martin Šimečka recalls that his father occasionally met with Miklós Duray to discuss issues regarding the Hungarian minority, and that Mikloško and Čarnogurský also came to the Šimečka home to discuss political issues.<sup>11</sup>

Huba's environmental movement, working with artists, musicians, and stage performers, organized a "Day of Pleasure" in Bratislava in

<sup>7</sup> *Bratislava nahlas*, 1987, LP and CSDS. Huba, interview.

<sup>8</sup> Šimečka, interview.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, Kusá, *Život v slove*, 125.

<sup>10</sup> Kusý, interview.

<sup>11</sup> Šimečka, interview.

June 1989. During the event, about 500 people came to a square in Bratislava to see dramatic performances, art, and singing. This demonstration of solidarity between environmentalists and artists undoubtedly was influenced by Budaj, who was responsible for the section detailing problems in Bratislava's social environment in *Bratislava nahlas*. Huba, however, later explained that Budaj was "only using environmental issues as cover" for an interest in the political opposition.<sup>12</sup>

On several occasions, the leading figures of the different streams of independent activity in Slovakia demonstrated their cooperation and solidarity with one another on specific issues. In October 1987, twenty-four leading figures from the Slovak secret church and literary underground issued a joint declaration of apology and regret to the "Jewish religious community in Bratislava and every Jewish citizen in Slovakia" for the deportation of Jews from the Independent Slovak Republic during the Second World War. The declaration also lamented the fact that Jewish synagogues and cemeteries had been permitted to fall into disrepair since the end of the war and that no dignified memorial to the deportees had been created. Ján Čarnogurský signed the declaration, as did Bishop Korec, Vladimír Jukl, and František Mikloško from the secret church, and Dominik Tatarka, Hana Ponická, Jozef Jablonický, and Martin Šimečka from the literary/artistic underground.<sup>13</sup> Slovak religious samizdat published this declaration, and an article dated the following month about the declaration in *Rodinné spoločenstvo*, reflecting the influence of Gorbachev's reform policies in the USSR, explained that it was a result of "new thinking" in respect to Slovak history.<sup>14</sup> Following the arrest and trial of Ivan Polanský (editor of several samizdat periodicals for the Slovak secret church), Czech and Slovak samizdat editors and publishers founded a "Committee for Solidarity With Ivan Polanský" in October 1988. The committee issued a statement protesting the guilty verdict and argued that independent publishing was a necessary defense against the State and party's monopoly of every aspect of social life. The eighty-three members of the committee signing this statement included representatives of Czech political samizdat (Václav

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<sup>12</sup> Huba, interview.

<sup>13</sup> "Vyhlásenie k deportáciám židov zo Slovenska," *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 5 (1987): 6–7. The declaration, along with names of the signatories, also appeared in *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* 5 (1987): 16–17. Čarnogurský also included it in a collection of his documents and speeches from the 1980s and 1990s. Čarnogurský, *Videné od Dunaja*, 122–124.

<sup>14</sup> "K ohlasom na vyhlásenie o deportácii židov," *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 1 (1988): 35–37.

Havel, Jiří Dienstbier, Václav Benda, and Ludvík Vaculík), Czech religious samizdat (Václav Malý and Augustin Navrátil), and Slovak political/literary samizdat (Ivan Hoffman, Miroslav Kusý, and Martin Šimečka). Ján Čarnogurský also belonged to this committee, which identified his name and address as contact address for the committee in Bratislava.<sup>15</sup> As these examples illustrate, leaders of the different streams did cooperate on a limited, individual level. Also evident is Čarnogurský's increasing political activism and engagement with other streams of independent activity.

Ján Čarnogurský, a devout Catholic and activist in the Slovak secret church, was the strongest link between the Slovak secret church and the political opposition in both the Czech lands and Slovakia. A lawyer by profession, Čarnogurský lost his license to practice law for defending Charter 77 activists in court in 1977. He then served as an unofficial legal consultant to both Charter 77 and the Slovak secret church and helped prepare several of Charter 77's documents regarding religious freedom in Czechoslovakia.<sup>16</sup> Čarnogurský, through his contacts with the Ján Hus Educational Foundation, also organized informal lectures in his apartment where members of the different streams of independent activity could meet to hear an informal lecture or participate in a discussion led by a visiting Oxford scholar or other intellectual from the West. Usually ten to fifteen activists from different streams of independent activity in Slovakia, including Kusý, Mikloško, Milan and Martin Šimečka, and Hana Ponická, attended these clandestine gatherings.<sup>17</sup>

On July 25, 1988, Čarnogurský sent a letter to the Ministry of Culture announcing that he had founded a new periodical called *Bratislavské listy*, and explained: "This periodical wants to create a space for the free discussion of problems in society and state, and also about alternative

<sup>15</sup> "Výbor solidarity s Ivanem Polanským," *Fragment K 4* (1988): 27–28. This document with the same title can be found in OSA: Dissidents/organization. Čarnogurský, interview.

<sup>16</sup> Čarnogurský, interview. See Prečan, *Charta 77*, 208–211 and 266–269. One Czech dissident recalled Čarnogurský showing up unannounced at her apartment in Prague at night to deliver documents he had hidden in his clothing. Conversation with author, Budapest, Hungary, 14 June 1996.

<sup>17</sup> Roger Scruton of the Jan Hus Educational Foundation coordinated the visits. Čarnogurský, interview; Šimečka, interview. Barbara Day, a former courier for the Ján Hus Foundation in Brno, wrote an account of the foundation's underground university in Czechoslovakia and the visitors who gave lectures. Day, *The Velvet Philosophers*, 224–232.

future developments.”<sup>18</sup> This was the first Slovak samizdat periodical to print the name and address of the editor (Čarnogurský). Its first issue in June 1988 documented and analyzed the significance of the “Bratislava’s Good Friday” demonstration earlier that year, illustrating the periodical’s emphasis on political issues.<sup>19</sup>

Despite examples of cooperation and ties established between activists of different streams, the various activists consciously maintained a distance between their separate activities and failed to develop a united movement for pluralism against the regime until the revolution had already begun in the Czech lands in November 1989. During a 1989 interview, Vladimír Janků, the Director of the Central Committee for Church Affairs, stated that “this so-called underground church is in reality identical to Charter 77.”<sup>20</sup> Although the regime viewed the secret church as a political opposition, the secret church avoided this type of designation. For example, Čarnogurský worked closely with Mikloško and the secret church, but he did not actively present himself as a part of the secret church or participate in the organization of the religious communities due to his ties with Charter 77. Likewise, Mikloško did not sign Charter 77 in order to protect the secret church from unnecessary attention.<sup>21</sup> The secret church feared the additional persecution from the regime that association with Charter 77 might bring, and it maintained its distance from the political opposition until the revolution began in November 1989.

While Charter 77 offered its support to the activities of the Slovak secret church, most vocally during the 31-point petition campaign and following the March 25 demonstration, Charter 77 activists and other civil dissidents in Slovakia were not actively involved with these activities of the secret church. Kusý reported that he never saw nor was he asked to sign the 31-point petition, and he was never directly invited to attend the March 25, 1988 demonstration: “The orientation of this activity was very separate, it was a separate action of the people of the Catholic Church.”<sup>22</sup> The Prague orientation of Charter 77 also discouraged many Slovak intellectuals from supporting its activities. Kusý explained: “From the Slovak side, [for] many

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<sup>18</sup> For the text of this letter, see Čarnogurský, *Videné od Dunaja*, 125–126.

<sup>19</sup> Čarnogurský, interview. On the first page of this inaugural issue, Čarnogurský outlined the goals of the periodical which he later reiterated in his July letter to the Ministry of Culture. *Bratislavské listy* 1 (1988): 1.

<sup>20</sup> Janků made this statement to a Viennese news organization in 1989. “Church Affairs Secretary Criticizes Tomášek,” *FBIS*, 2 March 1989, 12.

<sup>21</sup> Čarnogurský, interview.

<sup>22</sup> Kusý, interview.

Slovak intellectuals, Charter 77 was accepted as something which concerned Czechs... 'It was a Prague affair'... they said, 'We will not engage in Prague things.' 'It [had] some distance from Charter 77 up to 1989.'<sup>23</sup> This attitude was most evident among the leaders of the environmental movement in Slovakia, particularly Jan Budaj, who according to his colleagues, rejected cooperation with the Czechs. Budaj also wanted to keep the environmental movement separate from any forms of political opposition.<sup>24</sup> In response to the authorities' seizure of 2,000 copies of a second printing of *Bratislava nahlas* and several articles in *Pravda* critical of its findings, the environmentalists circulated a petition to gain popular support in defense of their work.<sup>25</sup> Although Kusý, Milan Šimečka, and Martin Šimečka signed this petition, Budaj had their names removed from it before submitting it to the authorities. When Martin Šimečka asked Budaj for an explanation, he was told that their names would disturb the authorities.<sup>26</sup> Budaj also told Kusý that his signature and support from the political opposition would "discredit" the environmental movement.<sup>27</sup> Despite Budaj's and the environmental movement's increasing political orientation after the publication of *Bratislava nahlas*, Budaj did not want the authorities to view the environmental movement as having direct ties to the political opposition. Huba explained that between 1987 and 1989, the environmental movement became more openly opposed to the regime and Budaj became more interested in political opposition than he had been earlier.<sup>28</sup>

As a result of this absence of cooperation, the various streams of independent activity in Slovakia remained isolated from one another. Each stream had succeeded in overcoming Communist efforts to restrict society and some contact and networks between leaders of different streams had emerged in the late 1980s. Yet, the streams of independent activity or "islands of positive deviation" remained relatively isolated, ironically creating a self-imposed atomized sphere of independent activity in Slovakia.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Šimečka, interview.

<sup>25</sup> For Czech samizdat report on *Bratislava nahlas*, official response, and petition, see "Nahlas o životním prostředí v Bratislave," *Lidové Noviny* 1 (January 1988): 7. For *Pravda* attacks, see "Úvaha nad 'zelenou' Borzurkou Bratislava nahlas," *Pravda*, 4 February 1988, 3, CSDS. Also, a two part series "Verejne a nahlas o Bratislave-Nahlas nech prehovorí fakty," *Pravda*, 30 March 1988, 3 and 31 March 1988, 3. Each of these documents found in CSDS: Bratislava nahlas.

<sup>26</sup> Šimečka, interview.

<sup>27</sup> Kusý, interview.

<sup>28</sup> Huba, interview.



## The Movement for Civic Freedom: A New Strategy of Opposition

On October 15, 1988, 126 Czechs and Slovaks formally announced the formation of a new opposition group called the Movement for Civic Freedoms (Hnutí za občiansku slobodu, hereafter HOS) by signing a manifesto titled "Democracy for All." While many members were Czechs who were well known for their activities in Charter 77 (Václav Havel, Václav Benda, Rudolf Battěk), several politically-oriented individuals from Slovakia, including Čarnogurský, Kusý, Ján Langoš, and Milan Šimečka, also belonged to HOS. The first sentence of the movement's founding manifesto announced: "The time has come to get involved in politics."<sup>29</sup> HOS signaled the formal introduction of a new dissident strategy of reform in Czechoslovakia and the increased involvement of Slovaks in the political opposition. Through its program of reform, HOS built a bridge toward closer cooperation between the different streams of independent activity in Slovakia. Although only a handful of Slovaks chose to cross this bridge in the first year of its existence, the activities of HOS in Slovakia ultimately helped link the "islands of positive deviation" in time for the Velvet Revolution. Also, it did so in a manner that brought Čarnogurský to the forefront of the political opposition in Slovakia.

Following the same method perfected by Charter 77 and the Slovak secret church, HOS publicized its work through a number of domestic and international outlets. On two occasions before its foundation—September 30 and October 12—Czech dissident Rudolf Battěk sent copies of the manifesto along with letters explaining it and the new movement to contacts in West Germany and Vienna. These contacts then alerted Western media, such as Radio Free Europe and Voice of America, about the movement only after its founding on October 15.<sup>30</sup> HOS also founded two new samizdat periodicals, *Alternativa* and *Zpravodaj HOS*, to publicize its goals, statements, correspondence, discussions, and other information about the movement's activities.<sup>31</sup> Both periodicals were published in the Czech lands, though Milan Šimečka sat on the editorial board of *Alternativa*.

<sup>29</sup> "Demokracii pro všechny (Manifest Hnutí za občanskou svobodu)" (Prague, Brno, Bratislava, 15 October 1988), CSDS: HOS fond. For an English translation of the manifesto, see Skilling, *Civic Freedom in Central Europe*, 135–143.

<sup>30</sup> See Letter, September 30, 1988, Rudolf Battěk, Prague, to Ivan Medek, Vienna. The second letter is dated October 12, 1988. CSDS: HOS fond.

<sup>31</sup> The first issue of *Alternativa* appeared in December 1988. *Alternativa* 1 (December 1988). The first issue of *Zpravodaj HOS* followed in January 1989. *Zpravodaj HOS* 1 (January 1989).

tiva. In Slovakia, Čarnogurský published many of HOS documents, including its manifesto, in his *Bratislavské listy*.<sup>32</sup>

The Movement for Civic Freedom distinguished itself from Charter 77 by introducing a program of political reform. Its manifesto was divided into twelve thematic arenas highlighting areas that needed to be reformed. These included: "Political Pluralism," "A New Democratic Constitution," "Overhaul of the Legal System," "Freedom of Belief," "Paths to Economic Prosperity," "Saving the Environment," "Free Intellectual Activity," "Independent Trade Unions," "Stop the Militarization of Society," "National Sovereignty," and "Czechoslovakia As Part of Europe." According to the manifesto: "The present regime is aware of this crisis [of moral decline] and has declared its intention to institute certain piecemeal reforms. However, it is incapable of changing its nature and abandoning its totalitarian style of government, which is the root cause of the crisis. That is why the time is ripe for society itself—in other words, all of us—to enter the political arena."<sup>33</sup> Juraj Kohutiar, a Slovak member of HOS, summarized the new approach of this organization: "Charter 77 called for respecting existing laws in the ČSSR. The Movement for Civic Freedom called for new laws, new legislation."<sup>34</sup> In June 1989, HOS reiterated these reforms by issuing a document outlining basic principles for a new constitution and citing specific ways the constitution should be reformed to meet the specific concerns of each of the twelve arenas.<sup>35</sup>

Despite the relatively small number of Slovaks in HOS, they played an active role in the movement and pursued many activities in Slovakia. Batték identified Čarnogurský, Kusý and Milan Šimečka, all from Slovakia, as among the most important people who would be signing the manifesto.<sup>36</sup> In its complete and final version, the HOS manifesto concluded with twelve contact names and addresses, including Čarnogurský's.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to the participation of Slovakia's most politically oriented dissidents (Milan Šimečka and Kusý), the movement's interests and membership indicates a close connection to the Slovak secret church. On the

<sup>32</sup> *Bratislavské listy* 2 (1988): 8–10.

<sup>33</sup> "Demokracii pro vsechny," CSDS: HOS fond. Also, Skilling, *Civic Freedom in Central Europe*, 135.

<sup>34</sup> Kohutiar, interview.

<sup>35</sup> "Principy nove ustavy," *Zpravodaj HOS* 4 (June 1989): 1–2 and *Alternativa* 3 (August 1989): 5–7.

<sup>36</sup> Letter, September 30, 1988, Rudolf Batték, Prague, to Ivan Medek, Vienna. CSDS: HOS Fond.

<sup>37</sup> Hlušičková, *Hnutí za občanskou svobodu*, 25–32.

subject of religious freedom, both the HOS manifesto and the proposed constitutional reform suggested changes remarkably similar to the demands expressed in the 31-point petition and at the March 25, 1988 demonstration in Bratislava. The HOS manifesto referred to the significance of “recent actions by Catholics in support of the rights of believers and of civil liberties.”<sup>38</sup> Čarnogurský led the Slovak branch of HOS and approximately forty Slovaks belonged to it, although some were more active than others.<sup>39</sup> Čarnogurský’s *Bratislavské listy*, a part of the Slovak secret church’s samizdat network, published a Slovak version of the manifesto that listed the names of both Čarnogurský and Milan Šimečka as contact people in Bratislava.<sup>40</sup> The December issue of *Alternativa* contained Čarnogurský’s report of the first meeting in Slovakia on November 11. According to his report, fifteen people attended and discussed the political situation in Slovakia, the importance of concrete action, and the security of its members. Čarnogurský also reported: “All present, old and young, told their personal reasons for membership in the movement. It came out that the majority linked some manner of engagement in the movement with their Christian belief.”<sup>41</sup> HOS provided a venue for Slovaks who wanted to be more active politically in a movement not completely directed from Prague. As Čarnogurský’s observations at this meeting indicate, many came with a religious orientation. One of these was Juraj Kohutiar, a member of the Slovak secret church who had helped in the technical aspects of publishing the samizdat periodical *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť*. Kohutiar shifted his activities from the secret church to the political activities of HOS. He formally signed the HOS manifesto on December 17, 1988 and became one its more active Slovak members. Kohutiar completely ceased his activities in the secret church so as not to draw secret police attention to it from his political opposition in HOS.<sup>42</sup> Two other members of HOS, Anton Selecký and Ján Langoš, had been active in the Slovak secret church and its samizdat publishing activities. Other HOS members in Slovakia, such as Hana Ponická and Ivan Hoffman, though primarily active in the literary underground, had supported the Slovak secret church’s recent activities. Ponická, a Lutheran activist, had witnessed the March 25 demonstration, and her account of it, published in both

<sup>38</sup> “Democracii pro všechny,” 8–9, CSDS: HOS fond.

<sup>39</sup> Kohutiar, interview.

<sup>40</sup> “Democraciu pre všetkých—Manifest Hnutia za občiansku slobodu,” *Bratislavské listy* 2 (1988): 8–10.

<sup>41</sup> Ján Čarnogurský, “HOS na Slovensku,” *Alternativa* 1 (1988): 10.

<sup>42</sup> Kohutiar, interview. Kohutiar’s membership in HOS was announced in “Noví účastníci Hnuti za občanskou svobodu,” *Alternativa* 1 (December 1988): 14–16.

religious and political samizdat periodicals, strongly supported the Slovak secret church's activities. Hoffman's support of the demonstration had likewise been published in both religious and political samizdat in Slovakia.

Although the overall membership of HOS was predominantly Czech, its Slovak members did not let their smaller number limit their willingness to take public action. One of the first statements issued by the Slovak branch of HOS illustrates the Christian orientation that Čarnogurský and other Slovak members brought to the movement. On the occasion of the Day of Human Rights on December 10, 1988, the Slovak branch announced its solidarity with several Catholics imprisoned in Czechoslovakia for their religious or political convictions.<sup>43</sup> A version of this announcement sent to Radio Free Europe referred specifically to the imprisonment of Ivan Polanský and Augustin Navrátil.<sup>44</sup> In contrast, HOS documents issued in the Czech lands on the same occasion placed no such emphasis on the issue of religious freedom or imprisoned Catholics.<sup>45</sup>

HOS in Slovakia became increasingly active in the public sphere in 1989. In April, it announced a public commemoration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Milan Rastislav Štefánik, to take place on Sunday afternoon, May 7, at his memorial in northwest Slovakia. Štefánik had worked with Tomáš G. Masaryk and Edvard Beneš to help found Czechoslovakia before dying in a plane crash in 1919. The announcement of this commemoration explained that Štefánik had stood for "basic civil rights, democratic pluralism, religious freedom and other rights."<sup>46</sup> In an effort to interfere with HOS' planned commemoration, the authorities rescheduled their own event at the site from May 3 to May 7. Of the 6,000 people who attended the official event, an estimated 1,500 remained for the unofficial event, held at the top of the hill where the memorial is located. Čarnogurský and Hana Ponická spoke on behalf of HOS.<sup>47</sup> Kohutiar described this event as "dissident" activity and a success in attracting a large number of people and publicity (as well as secret police.)<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup> "Vyhlásenia Hnutia za občiansku slobodu na Slovensku," *Alternativa* 1 (December 1988): 11.

<sup>44</sup> Hlušičková, *Hnutí za občanskou svobodu*, 48, fn 1.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 50–52.

<sup>46</sup> Štefánik's death actually occurred on May 4, but May 7 was the closest free day. Ibid., 107–108.

<sup>47</sup> Anton Selecký, "Spomienka slávnosť na Štefánikovom Bradle," *Bratislavské listy* 2 (1989): 12–13.

<sup>48</sup> Kohutiar, interview.

Although HOS had issued a very broad program of reform and supported its words with action in Slovakia, its success in tapping support from other streams of independent activity in Slovakia was quite limited for much of 1989. While it had brought members of Slovakia's political opposition together with some activists in the secret church, HOS in Slovakia did not enjoy direct cooperation of the Slovak secret church's leadership and membership. Even the environmental movement, whose interests the HOS manifesto had supported, maintained a distance from HOS. There is no evidence that Mikuláš Huba and Ján Budaj, or other environmentalists, openly supported HOS. This separation continued until HOS in Slovakia organized a second effort to stage a public event in August 1989.

### The Bratislava Five

On August 4, 1989, HOS in Slovakia announced in a letter to the Slovak government its plans to lay flowers at two sites in Bratislava where Slovak students had been killed in 1968. The Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion, which brought a violent end to Dubček's reform process, had begun during the night of August 20, so HOS planned to commemorate the two victims on that date. Five Slovak members of HOS, Kusý, Ponická, Selecký, Vladimír Maňák, and Čarnogurský, signed this letter.<sup>49</sup> Though the five had been randomly selected during the planning of the event, their backgrounds represented two of the main streams of independent activity in Slovakia.<sup>50</sup> While Kusý (the only Slovak living in Slovakia to sign Charter 77 in 1977, as already noted) and Maňák had been involved in political dissent, Čarnogurský and Selecký had backgrounds in the Slovak secret church. Ponická had close contact with both of these streams. Several days before the scheduled event, on August 14, the police arrested the five who had signed the letter, as well as other HOS members in Slovakia.<sup>51</sup> Despite their arrest and the presence of police with nightsticks and

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<sup>49</sup> Later copies of this letter included the signature of Andrej Stryček on behalf of Čarnogurský. Samizdat copy of letter, personal collection of Vladimír Maňák, ml., [hereafter PA-VM]. A copy can also be found in OSA: Dissident Personalities—Čarnogurský.

<sup>50</sup> Juraj Kohutiar, present at the HOS meeting planning this event, explained that the five had been selected randomly simply based on who was sitting in the first five seats. Kohutiar, interview.

<sup>51</sup> Kusý, interview. Kohutiar, among those arrested, reported that he was only held for several hours. Kohutiar, interview.

handcuffs at the sites, the event went on as planned and some members of the public attended.<sup>52</sup>

Overshadowing the significance of this public gathering is the protest against the arrest of five Slovak members of HOS, who quickly became known as the “Bratislava Five,” in the following weeks. The protests against their arrest succeeded for the first time in bringing together the different streams of independent activity in Slovakia. Kusý explains that Slovak intellectuals unwilling to become active in the political opposition due to its Prague orientation, i.e., Charter 77, kept their distance from opposition activity until the arrest of the “Bratislava Five”: “When we were arrested... we [could] presuppose that it would be a political trial... a big political spectacle with jail and all that it was supposed to be. Yes, it was the first time that the Slovak intellectuals are coming [*sic.*] into some activities... some protest activities. They signed the protest against our imprisonment and they asked [the police] to free us.”<sup>53</sup> Kusý was referring to a letter that thirty-three Czech and Slovaks signed and sent to President Husák on August 30 protesting the arrest of the five. Most signing this letter were Slovaks, and they came from a number of different streams of independent activity in Slovakia. Many had not previously been involved in HOS activities. They included environmentalists Mikuláš Huba and Peter Tatár; Slovak secret church leaders Bishop Korec, Silvester Kréméry, and Mikloško; and individuals active in the artistic and literary underground, such as Oleg Pastier and Martin Šimečka. Also signing this letter were prominent individuals not previously active in Slovakia’s underground, including actor Milan Kňažko and hero of the Prague Spring Alexander Dubček. The text and names of the individuals who signed the letter were publicized throughout Czechoslovakia via Radio Free Europe broadcasts, as well as in Slovak and Czech religious samizdat periodicals including *Rodinné spoločenstvo*, *Hlas Slovenska*, and *Informace o cirkvi*.<sup>54</sup> Letters of protest came from other segments of Slovak society. Thirteen Slovak sociologists, many of whom had theorized about opposition from their positions in official institutions, including Martin Bútora, Vladimír Krivý, Iveta

<sup>52</sup> Kohutiar, interview.

<sup>53</sup> Kusý, interview.

<sup>54</sup> Letter, August 30, 1989, Bratislava, OSA–Dissident sources. For samizdat sources, see “Žiadosť zastaviť trestného stíhania,” *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 5 (1989): 18–19; “List prezidentovi republiky,” *Hlas Slovensko* 4 (1989): 3–4; and “Dopis Slovenských intelektuálov prezidentu ČSSR,” *Informace o cirkvi* 10 (1989): 15.

Radičová, and Soňa Szomolányiová, also addressed a letter of protest to President Husák the following week.<sup>55</sup> Five prominent Slovak writers, including Ľubomír Feldek and Peter Zajac, also issued a letter of protest.<sup>56</sup> Čarnogurský believes that the police had underestimated the political situation in Slovakia: “They wished to suppress all sectors of the opposition... very soon the police realized they made a mistake because the effect was just the opposite... various sectors united to support us.”<sup>57</sup>

The arrest of the “Bratislava Five” helped bring a number of different streams, particularly the Slovak secret church and the environmental movement, into open cooperation against the regime. In addition, it mobilized other groups and individuals within Slovakia, such as Slovak sociologists, writers, the actor Milan Kňažko and Alexander Dubček toward opposition activity. Martin Šimečka recalled that Dubček had met secretly with his father in the late 1980s to discuss the future, but Dubček maintained his belief that socialism could be reformed and this had kept him separate from Charter 77 and other opposition groups in Czechoslovakia until 1989.<sup>58</sup> HOS in Slovakia issued its own protest of their arrest, and one member of HOS from central Slovakia organized a petition signed by forty-nine people from his region to support the protest.<sup>59</sup>

Despite this evidence of popular support, a larger mobilization of broader segments of the population did not take place until the actual trials of the Bratislava Five in mid-November 1989. In the meantime, the Slovak secret church began mobilizing its samizdat and organizational resources in their support. In its fall issue, *Rodinné spoločenstvo* published an article explaining what the Bratislava Five had planned, what they had been charged with and asked its readers to sign a petition protesting their arrest and upcoming trial.<sup>60</sup> From September to December 1989, *Katolícky mesačník* and other religious samizdat periodicals published excerpts from

<sup>55</sup> Žatkuliak, *November 1989 a Slovensko*, 302–303. Iveta Radičová, another signatory, explained that she had maintained her official position despite her refusal to sign a state-sponsored document denouncing Charter 77 in the late 1970s. Iveta Radičová, interview by author, Bratislava, Slovakia, July 1996.

<sup>56</sup> “Czechoslovak Intellectuals Protest Against the Prosecution of Five Slovak Dissidents,” *RFE/RL*, 5 September 1989, C(1).

<sup>57</sup> Čarnogurský, interview.

<sup>58</sup> Šimečka, interview.

<sup>59</sup> Letter, 20 September 1989, Bratislava, OSA: Slovak Dissent. For the text of the petition, dated September 21, 1989, Považska Bystrica, see OSA: Slovak Dissent.

<sup>60</sup> “Hovori právnik,” *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 5 (1989): 17–18.

letters Čarnogurský had written to his wife and children from prison.<sup>61</sup> *Bratislavské listy* published several articles analyzing the upcoming trials, as well as the text of the charges against Kusý and Čarnogurský, which were more serious than those against the other three.<sup>62</sup> The prosecution charged Kusý with “harming state interests abroad” for his weekly telephone reports to Radio Free Europe, rather than his plan to lay flowers. The charges against Čarnogurský were changed in a similar manner and focused on his involvement in the publication of *Bratislavské listy*.<sup>63</sup>

The secret church also mobilized its members and other Slovak Catholics to demonstrate in front of the Palace of Justice during the November trials. On November 1, Father Anton Srholec, the priest of Čarnogurský’s congregation in Bratislava and an active member in the Slovak secret church and its samizdat publishing activities, reportedly told his congregation: “We are all on trial with Ján” and instructed them to “Do everything you can for his release.”<sup>64</sup> Čarnogurský’s trial, originally scheduled for the first week in November, was postponed until November 22–23 due to the health problems of his defense attorney. Press reports indicate that in the first week of November, hundreds of people marched in front of the Palace of Justice in Bratislava and demanded his release.<sup>65</sup> Public protests continued during the trial of Kusý, Ponická, Selecký, and Maňák on November 13–14. Alexander Dubček attended the first day of the trial, and an estimated one hundred protesters, not able to join the fifty to sixty observers inside the courtroom, protested outside. The court found Kusý guilty, but gave him probation rather than a prison sentence and acquitted Ponická, Selecký, and Maňák. After the verdict was announced, the demonstrators waiting outside shouted “Long Live Freedom” and “Long Live Dubček.”<sup>66</sup>

The arrest and trial of the Bratislava Five in the fall of 1989 facilitated the convergence of streams of independent activity. Previously, the

<sup>61</sup> For the text of his first letter, see *Katolícky mesačník* 9 (1989) and *Informace o církvi* 11 (1989): 18–21. The text of his second letter, however, appeared in samizdat only after the main events of the Velvet Revolution. See *Katolícky mesačník* 12 (1989): 9.

<sup>62</sup> *Bratislavské listy* 3 (1989): 7–8.

<sup>63</sup> Kusý, interview.

<sup>64</sup> From an unpublished Keston College report profiling Čarnogurský, see KI: CZ Rom 2, Čarnogurský, Ján.

<sup>65</sup> “Hundred Demonstrate for Release of Activist,” *FBIS*, 7 November 1989, 17.

<sup>66</sup> “Rights Activist Gets Suspended Sentence, Other Three Acquitted,” *Associated Press*, 14 November 1989, OSA: 300-30-Ponická. A British reporter for the *Independent Press*, reported that over 100 people chanted slogans outside the courtroom. November 14, 1989, OSA: personalities, Dubček. Ponická, Selecký, and Maňák were not held in prison during their prosecution. “Czechoslovak Intellectuals Protest,” CS.



streams had only been linked through: overlapping membership (Hana Ponická as an underground author and protestant activist with connections to Charter 77); personal ties (the friendship between Martin Šimečka and Ján Budaj); and through the broad program of Charter 77 which articulated the rights of each stream. The demands for the Bratislava Five's release linked the themes of religious freedom with human rights and political reform in the revolutionary events in Slovakia.

### Archipelagos of Activity in the GDR

The sphere of independent activity in Leipzig began to change after 1985 as other church-based groups gradually stepped to the forefront. By the end of 1988, the Evangelical Church had sponsored over twenty groups in Leipzig and each group had successfully organized activities independent of state control. Leipzig's groups, despite their range of interests and approaches, represented the kind of an archipelago of independent activity that the Slovak sociologists had discussed in their analysis of positive deviation. The membership of each group remained relatively small, rarely exceeding forty active members. These small "islands of separateness" or "islands of positive deviation," however, never existed in isolation from one another.<sup>67</sup> Several formal and informal ties linked these islands of church-based activity in Leipzig. Their work together, rather than the work of any single group, helped make Leipzig an important center of opposition activity in the GDR.<sup>68</sup>

Common church-sponsorship facilitated the earliest contact between these groups. Pastor Gröger and the Jugendpfarramt, which sponsored both AG Friedensdienst and AG Umweltschutz in the first half of the 1980s, represented an important link between these two groups. Both groups met at the Jugendpfarramt and their activities were publicized through the Jugendpfarramt's own publications. The Jugendpfarramt helped Leipzig's church-based groups develop greater contact by permitting the publication of *Kontakte: Frieden, Umwelt, Dritte-Welt* in 1984.

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<sup>67</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski discuss the notion of "islands of separateness" in their examination of totalitarian political systems. Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship*, 239.

<sup>68</sup> Patricia Jo Smith argues that groups in Leipzig, unlike those in Erfurt, "maintained good communication and working relationships both with Berlin groups and with groups in other cities and regions." Patricia Jo Smith, "Democratizing East Germany," 250.

*Kontakte* published announcements and information about each group's activities. This monthly newsletter built an information bridge between Leipzig's groups, including groups not sponsored by the Jugendpfarramt such as IG Hoffnung Nikaragua.<sup>69</sup>

The Friedensdekade and weekly prayer-for-peace services at the Nikolaikirche also facilitated contact between Leipzig's groups. At the second Friedensdekade in 1982 several different groups in Leipzig, including the regional group of Aktion Sühnezeichen and AG Umweltschutz had been invited to lead prayer-for-peace services. When these services became weekly events that year, Leipzig's groups continued to take turns leading them. Therefore, access to the Friedensdekade and weekly prayer-for-peace services was never limited to peace groups or peace issues. They provided an opportunity for all of Leipzig's church-based groups to become informed about the issues and work of other groups, and to get to know their members.

The work of Leipzig's church-based groups became more centralized and coordinated within the church through the formation of the *Bezirkssynodalausschuß für Frieden und Gerechtigkeit* (Regional Synodical Committee for Peace and Justice) in 1986.<sup>70</sup> Superintendent Magirius created this committee to bring all of Leipzig's groups into a single church structure within his superintendent's office of Leipzig-East.<sup>71</sup> Membership in this committee had represented an important way for AG Friedensdienst to maintain its connection with the Evangelical Church after Pastor Gröger had expressed his unwillingness in 1985 to remain responsible for the group.<sup>72</sup> Groups joining the Regional Synodical Committee, however, did not have to give up their church sponsor. For example, AG Umweltschutz maintained its close connection to the Jugendpfarramt after joining.

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<sup>69</sup> Moritz, interview. For the most complete collection of *Kontakte*, see ABL: *Kontakte*

<sup>70</sup> The original title had been Regional Synodical Committee for Peace Service, Environmental Protection and the Third-World (*Bezirkssynodalausschuß für Friedensdienst, Umweltschutz und Dritte Welt*). Minutes from a February 1986 meeting of the committee's leadership explain that the name was simplified to "Committee for Peace and Justice" with the understanding that this new title still spoke to protection of nature, the third world issues and other social issues that its groups might address. "Zur Information des Herrn Superintendenten," 27 February 1986, ABL 11.12.1.

<sup>71</sup> Helmut Nitzsche, interview.

<sup>72</sup> Members of AG Friedensdienst discussed joining Magirius' planned committee at the same meeting when Gröger asked the group to leave the Jugendpfarramt. "Gedächtnisprotokoll, Treff der AG Friedensdienst, 2.4.85."

At a 1983 meeting of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, Canada, East German representatives of the Kirchenbund had proposed a world conference in 1990 that would address the issue of justice, peace, and the preservation of creation (referring to environmental protection). The formation of the Regional Synodical Committee by Superintendent Magirius had been inspired by this ecumenical initiative called, the “conciliar process.” Church-based groups in Leipzig and other East German cities had been addressing these three themes since 1981. This international initiative supported by the Kirchenbund brought new support and legitimacy to their work. The Jugendpfarramt’s decision to support the publication *Kontakte* after 1984 is a further example of increased church support for initiatives related to these three themes of the “conciliar process.”<sup>73</sup> The Catholic peace group Friedenskreis Grünau/Lindenau also belonged to this committee. IG Leben and AG Menschenrechte joined after their formation in 1987. By 1989, nine additional local groups, including Aktion Sühnezeichen’s regional group and AK Gerechtigkeit, were represented within the committee.<sup>74</sup>

In addition to connecting Leipzig’s groups to the superintendent’s office, the Regional Synodical Committee introduced a new element of coordination to their activities. Each month, one to two representatives from each group met to discuss problems, share ideas, or publicize upcoming activities with the other groups. Helmut Nitzsche, Helmut Wolff, and Brigitte Moritz represented AG Friedensdienst within the committee.<sup>75</sup> A pastor from Leipzig with a degree in law chaired the committee.<sup>76</sup> Pastor Wonneberger, at the request of Superintendent Magirius, worked closely within the committee and took over the organization of the weekly prayer-for-peace services at the Nikolaikirche. Until this time, the groups themselves had decided which group would lead each prayer-for-peace service, and the group responsible for the service on a given week would select and develop its own theme for the service. Pastor Wonneberger clearly recognized the political potential of the weekly prayer-for-peace services

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<sup>73</sup> Pastor Gröger and Brigitte Moritz both emphasized the positive impact of the “conciliar process” on the work of Leipzig’s church-based groups. Gröger, interview. Moritz, interview. Dietrich and Schwabe’s description of the “conciliar process” refers to this legitimizing factor. Dietrich, *Freunde und Feinde*, 482–483.

<sup>74</sup> Dietrich and Schwabe identify which groups joined and when. Dietrich, *Freunde und Feinde*, 464–465.

<sup>75</sup> Helmut Nitzsche, interview. For the minutes of the monthly meetings of the committee between 1986 and 1989, see ABL 11.12

<sup>76</sup> Dietrich, *Freunde und Feinde*, 465.

and he ensured that every church-based group in Leipzig had the opportunity to lead one of these services. He organized a schedule, usually two months in advance, detailing which group would lead a particular service and when.<sup>77</sup>

Superintendent Magirius' Regional Synodical Committee represented an important formal connection between Leipzig's groups, but individuals belonging to more than one group also served as an effective informal link. While the significance of multiple group membership is difficult to measure, it reveals that even the more moderate groups had members who were also active in more politically-oriented groups. Ernst Demele, who joined AG Friedensdienst in 1987, also belonged to the much more radical IG Leben.<sup>78</sup> Kathrin Walther, an active member of AG Umweltschutz, also belonged to AG Menschenrechte and AK Gerechtigkeit after their formation in 1987.

Leipzig's groups also developed contact with church-based groups throughout the GDR through several church initiatives. In 1983, representatives of these groups began meeting once a year at a gathering called the *Frieden konkret* (Peace Concretely). Though the origin of this name is unclear, it may be related to what Padraic Kenney refers to as the "konkretny generation" in Central Europe in the mid-1980s. Kenney writes: "Konkretny meant focused on reality: on everyday problems and on realistic, effective means of overcoming, or at least exposing, them."<sup>79</sup> The Berlin-Brandenburg Landeskirche had organized the first of these GDR-wide gatherings, but in the following years they were held in a different city each spring. Non-peace-oriented groups could attend and it provided an opportunity for representatives from GDR's church-based groups to meet and share their work with other groups. Attendance ranged from one hundred to three hundred people each year. Leipzig hosted the 1987 *Frieden konkret*, attended by two hundred people.<sup>80</sup> A second opportunity for representatives of Leipzig's groups to meet and develop ties with members of other church-based groups in the GDR developed in the context of the "conciliar process." In preparation for this 1990 conference, the

<sup>77</sup> Christoph Wonneberger, interview by author, Leipzig, Germany, 9 May 2001. Kloß, interview. The minutes of the committee's monthly meeting usually indicated this schedule. Approximately nine groups shared the rotation for leading the prayer-for-peace services. See ABL 11.12.

<sup>78</sup> Demele, interview.

<sup>79</sup> Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution*, 13.

<sup>80</sup> Dietrich and Schwabe's chronology provides the dates, location, and attendance figures for the seven *Frieden konkret* between 1983 and 1989. Dietrich, *Freunde und Feinde*.

Kirchenbund organized three ecumenical gatherings in the GDR where representatives of the GDR's church-based groups could meet to discuss the issues of peace, justice and the protection of the creation.

The regional group of Aktion Sühnezeichen in Leipzig helped IG Leben organize a "Day of Solidarity with Romania" on October 29, 1988. This joint activity between a relatively moderate (Aktion Sühnezeichen) and a younger, more radical group (IG Leben) demonstrated that cooperation was possible and could be mutually beneficial. The inspiration for this event came from news of the Romanian government's plans to level about 8,000 villages in Transylvania and relocate the inhabitants, mostly Hungarians, to large apartment complexes. The Transylvanian Hungarians and the Hungarian government opposed this policy and viewed it as an effort to destroy their cultural heritage in Romania.<sup>81</sup> The activities planned for this event in Leipzig focused on building awareness about the economic, political, and cultural situation in Romania and included lectures, discussion, an exhibition, a reading of Romanian literature, a slide presentation, and an offering collection to be sent to Romania.<sup>82</sup> This event was quite distinct from Aktion Sühnezeichen's earlier work and signaled this regional group's more direct involvement in opposition activity. By addressing the current political situation in Romania, Aktion Sühnezeichen's regional group in Leipzig had broadened its activities beyond service for peace and atonement. The "Day for Romania" activities took place at the church in the Mockau suburb of Leipzig, and were organized for the general public, not just members of Aktion Sühnezeichen, IG Leben, or the Evangelical Church.

Since its foundation in 1958, Aktion Sühnezeichen had hoped to gain the involvement of the general public in its activities. By not openly soliciting the public in its activities and publications, it had enjoyed the protection of the Evangelical Church. In fact, Aktion Sühnezeichen's close link with the Evangelical Church had made it possible for IG Leben to get access to a church for the event. In July 1988, Aktion Sühnezeichen's members in Leipzig had sent out identical letters to several other churches in Leipzig requesting the use of a church room for the planned event. The letters described the activities that would take place, but only identified Aktion Sühnezeichen and the Jugendpfarramt as the organizers.<sup>83</sup> It is

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<sup>81</sup> Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*, 95.

<sup>82</sup> "Einladung: Tag der Solidarität mit Rumänien," ABL 1.35.9.

<sup>83</sup> "Antrag auf Nutzung der Kirchenräume," letter from Aktion Sühnezeichen Leipzig to Church board of Paulus congregation, 7 July 1988, ABL: 1.35.12. For the identical letter

unclear why none of these letters mentioned IG Leben's participation in this event. Aktion Sühnezeichen may have used its closer ties to the Evangelical Church as an established movement to help IG Leben, a more radical group with weaker relationship to the church, get access to a church for this event. Perhaps mention of IG Leben's involvement would have hampered their efforts to find a church space. In any case, the fact that the organizers sent identical letters to churches throughout the city reveals that even church-sponsorship did not make access to the church's resources or rooms automatic. Instead, it depended on the ability of a church-based group to persuade a particular pastor or congregation to support a proposed set of activities.

The increased contact and coordination between Leipzig's church-based groups and other groups in the GDR produced very mixed results. Though the Regional Synodical Committee brought these groups closer together, important differences persisted and prevented more formal ties between the groups themselves from developing. For example, AG Friedensdienst's members supported many of the issues advanced by IG Leben and AK Gerechtigkeit, but the willingness of these groups to take risks outside of the church's cover had little appeal to the members of AG Friedensdienst and prevented closer ties from developing. Leipzig's church-based groups remained relatively separate from one another and from similar groups elsewhere in the GDR, and a single-broad-based movement failed to emerge either in Leipzig or the GDR prior to 1989.

### **Prayer-for-Peace Services and New Tensions between Grassroots Groups and the Church**

In the latter half of the 1980s, East Germans from all over the GDR seeking emigration began coming to Leipzig for the prayer-for-peace services. These East Germans were drawn to the services because it was one of the few places in the GDR where they could bring attention to their desire to emigrate. It also became a place where they could share information with other East Germans seeking emigration. The pastor of the Nikolaikirche, Christian Führer, was sympathetic toward their situation, and in 1987 he formed a discussion group at the Nikolaikirche for emigration seekers.<sup>84</sup>

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to a different church board, see "Antrag auf Nutzung der Kirchenräume," letter from Aktion Sühnezeichen Leipzig to Church board of Laurentius congregation, 7 July 1988, ABL 1.35.14.

<sup>84</sup> Christian Führer, interview by author, Leipzig, Germany, 1 November 2001.

The arrival of the emigration seekers strengthened the popularity and the importance of the prayer-for-peace service by increasing the attendance. Attendance at the weekly services in the first half of the 1980s had rarely exceeded 100 and had even dipped to a handful in the mid-1980s. Between March 1988 to July 1989, approximately 700 people attended the prayer-for-peace services at the Nikolaikirche each week.<sup>85</sup> Their arrival, however, was not well received by many of Leipzig's church-based groups whose efforts focused on improving the situation in the GDR rather than on finding ways to get out. For Leipzig's groups, the prayer-for-peace services were a place where they could advance their concerns for improving the situation in the GDR. The emigration seekers, in contrast, having given up on the GDR, viewed the services as a way to publicize their desire to leave and, if lucky, be deported to the West.

In the fall of 1988 the church leadership in Leipzig and the church-based groups engaged in a contest over the control and content of the prayer-for-peace services. On August 15, 1988, Superintendent Magirius had issued a letter to each of the groups in the Regional Synodical Committee announcing that he was transferring responsibility and organization of the prayer-for-peace services to the Nikolaikirche's church council. Magirius explained in this letter that most of the participants at the prayer-for-peace services were no longer addressing the main themes of the conciliar process: peace, justice, and the protection of creation.<sup>86</sup> From the text of this letter and his statements in the following weeks, Magirius appears to have been concerned about losing control of the content of the services and protecting the church's position. At the conclusion of the next prayer-for-peace service, Magirius spoke about the importance of the clear separation between church and state that existed in the GDR. He also explained that the church-based groups involved in the prayer-for-peace services were no longer as small or as manageable as they once had been.<sup>87</sup> Pastor Klaus Kaden, who succeeded Pastor Gröger as youth pastor, explained that members of AK Solidarity Church had directly criticized the political system during a prayer-for-peace service it was leading in June 1988. Pastor Kaden recalled that that service had little to do with

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<sup>85</sup> Schwabe and Dietrich have compiled a breakdown of the attendance at the services from March 14, 1988 to July 3, 1989 (the last service before the summer break began) based on documented estimates made by participants and information in *Stasi* and police records. Dietrich, *Freunde und Feinde*, 487.

<sup>86</sup> ABL 1.24.18.

<sup>87</sup> ABL 1.24.23

religion or prayer. A hard rock musician had performed politically-oriented songs during the service. Magirius' letter was referring to the work of this and the other more politically-oriented groups in Leipzig. Under the new arrangement, the leadership and organization of the prayer-for-peace services shifted from the groups to the superintendents, pastors and theologians in Leipzig.<sup>88</sup>

The resulting conflict over control of the prayer-for-peace services led many of Leipzig's groups to direct their energy against the church leadership in Leipzig. Several of the more active groups in Leipzig, including IG Leben, AG Gerechtigkeit, and AG Umweltschutz, challenged the new arrangement by sending letters of protest to both Superintendents Magirius and Richter as well as to the bishop of the Landeskirche.<sup>89</sup> On two occasions, September 19 and October 17, 1988, group members attending the prayer-for-peace services wore bandages over their mouths that said "Speech Forbidden." Pastor Kaden told his interviewer in 1990 that some people in the church had signs that read "Stop the church hierarchy" and "The church people are the same as the ones outside."<sup>90</sup> The groups' arguments against the church leadership were becoming quite similar to their protests against the state. After the October 17 prayer-for-peace service, the second time that participants had worn bandages over their mouths, about 300 people met in a church building across from the Nikolaikirche. They addressed a statement to the State Secretary for Church Questions protesting the state's recent censorship of an official church periodical and the arrest the previous week of demonstrators in Berlin who had participated in a demonstration protesting this censorship. The statement, signed by 274 people, concluded, "We are of the opinion that a peaceful demonstration must be possible also in the GDR."<sup>91</sup> The following week, on October 24, fifteen members of AK Gerechtigkeit and IG Leben (including Jochen Läßig, Rainer Müller, and Uwe Schwabe) attempted to take their case to the people attending the prayer-for-peace service. During the service, they walked up to the altar with candles. One

<sup>88</sup> Philipsen, *We Were the People*, 147–149.

<sup>89</sup> ABL 1.24.19 and ABL 1.24.32.

<sup>90</sup> Philipsen, *We Were the People*, 148. Schwabe and Dietrich's chronology indicates that group members wore bandages over their mouths on September 19 and October 17. Dietrich, *Freunde und Feinde*, 523–524. *Die Mücke* (*The Mosquito*), a chronology of events in Leipzig written by members of Leipzig's church-based groups, devotes considerable attention to this conflict over the services, but does not mention the bandages. See *Die Mücke* (March 1989): 2–17, UBL: HA-S-PG4(4)-34.

<sup>91</sup> *Die Mücke*, 7–8.



sign that they carried read “We urge you to see the truth,” indicating that they did not believe that everyone in attendance was aware that the church leadership had taken control of the prayer-for-peace services. They attempted to read a statement at the end of the service, but Superintendent Magirius refused to let them do so. The group members then read their statement outside in front of the church to an estimated 450 people that had followed them out. In their statement they declared: “It is time to get involved, because we live now and we can no longer only hope for change in the future... The work of the church-based groups is a tested way to work for the broad themes of peace, justice, and the protection of the creation [the main themes of the church-supported conciliar process.]” They concluded their statement by arguing that the prayer-for-peace services were one of the only spaces that they could use to meet freely in the GDR.<sup>92</sup> Because this statement was read outside of the church, the leaders of this initiative received heavy fines from the police for having organized an unauthorized public gathering.<sup>93</sup>

A resolution to the prayer-for-peace services conflict developed not through negotiations between Superintendent Magirius and the church-based groups, but rather through several months of negotiations between the Regional Synodical Conference and the Nikolaikirche’s church council. Evidence from the minutes of meetings and letters of these two church bodies indicate that content and responsibility for the prayer-for-peace services remained a central issue. Superintendent Magirius appeared to have acted unilaterally in transferring responsibility for the prayer-for-peace services to the Nikolaikirche’s church council in August 1988. However, these sources suggest that this church council had also been involved in the decision. During the negotiations it was clear that the church council of the Nikolaikirche was not only concerned with controlling the content of the services, but also increasing its access to the prayer-for-peace services.<sup>94</sup> On December 8, 1988, Pastor Führer, on behalf of Nikolaikirche’s church council, issued a letter explaining the council’s terms for turning over the prayer-for-peace services to the Regional Synodical Committee. The letter identified eight components to be incorporated into each service: “1. a greeting through a pastor from the Nikolaikirche; 2. a song; 3. a scripture reading; 4. an interpretation of the reading by an ordained pastor and the group leading the service; 5. a prayer; 6.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 8–9.

<sup>93</sup> The fines ranged from 150 to 500 marks. Ibid., 9.

<sup>94</sup> ABL 1.24.41.

Information; 7. a closing word; 8. a song.”<sup>95</sup> This outline emphasized the religious orientation of the service, but point 6 also preserved the opportunity for the group leading the service to share information about its work or other news with those attending the prayer-for-peace service. To regulate this information, Pastor Führer and the church council proposed that four different people would have to assume responsibility for the information presented. The letter specified that they must include: the pastor giving the greeting, one member of the church council, one member of the church-based group leading the service, and the head of the Regional Synodical Committee or one of his representatives. Finally, Pastor Führer requested that the congregation of the Nikolaikirche would get to lead one prayer-for-peace service each month.<sup>96</sup> The representatives of the Regional Synodical Conference responded positively to this proposal, but requested that only a single pastor should be required to assume responsibility for each service. The committee concluded that, if there were no objections to this proposal, then it would be prepared to take over the prayer-for-peace services in April 1989, which it did.<sup>97</sup>

In 1987, Pastor Führer had placed a big red and white sign in front of his church that announced “Nikolaikirche—Open for Everyone.” This sign asserted what had been true for years, that anyone could attend the prayer-for-peace services on Monday evenings or even come into the church, which Führer kept open every day of the week.<sup>98</sup> During the conflict over the prayer-for-peace services in the fall of 1988, the right to attend the services was not an issue, but rather the content of the service and who should organize and be responsible for the services. In 1981, AG Friedensdienst had led every prayer-for-peace service during the Friedensdekade and after that first year, Leipzig’s different groups had shared the space. By 1988, the significance of the service had changed significantly. New church-based groups, many of whom were more politi-

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<sup>95</sup> ABL 1.24.43.

<sup>96</sup> Pastor Führer also stipulated that the planning and approval process for the prayer-for-peace services begin two months in advance. ABL 1.24.43. Giving responsibility to four different people had also been discussed at the November 21 meeting. ABL 1.24.41.

<sup>97</sup> For the minutes of this meeting on January 13, 1989, see ABL 11.12.74. The main points were submitted to the board of directors in a formal letter dated January 26, 1989. ABL 11.12.77. At their February 20, 1989 meeting, the committee established a schedule for the prayer-for-peace services from April to July 1989. ABL 11.12.80. One week later, on February 27, 1989, the committee submitted this schedule to the board of directors at the Nikolaikirche. ABL 11.12.81.

<sup>98</sup> Führer, interview.

cally-oriented than AG Friedensdienst had ever been, had begun leading the services. Attendance had also begun to increase dramatically. As one of the only places to address a larger audience on a regular basis, the prayer-for-peace services had become a highly contested space among Leipzig's church-based groups and even the church congregation of the Nikolai-kirche. Its function as a public space had also become adopted by East Germans outside of Leipzig, many of whom did not have backgrounds in church-sponsored groups. The conflict was not directly between church and state or even the church-based groups and the state as might be expected. Rather, it revealed the real tensions that existed between the local church leadership and the church-based groups that they sponsored. While groups such as IG Leben and AK Gerechtigkeit pushed the boundary of acceptable activity within the church, the church leadership struggled to retain control and oversight over their activities. This conflict reiterates the limits to independent activity that developed within the space provided by the church. At the October 24 confrontation between Superintendent Magirius and members of AK Gerechtigkeit and IG Leben during the prayer-for-peace service at the Nikolaikirche, the group members found that the only way that they could express their concerns was by taking their activity outside of the church, and thus leaving its protective cover.

## Summary

The various streams of independent activity in Slovakia and East Germany became increasingly integrated as archipelagos after 1985. In both cases, the archipelagos included groups that were becoming more willing to pursue politically-engaged or even politically-oppositional activity, thereby producing ties between more moderate and more radical activists. In Leipzig, the Regional Synodical Committee brought AG Friedensdienst and AG Umweltschutz—both older, more moderate church sponsored groups—into association with the more recently formed IG Leben, AK Gerechtigkeit and AG Menschenrechte who with the support of Pastor Wonneberger were trying to transform the church into a political forum. In Slovakia, Ján Čarnogurský personified this link as a leader of HOS in Slovakia and subsequently as one of the Bratislava Five. Of course, this differentiation between oppositional activity and the less confrontational focus on spiritual development is purely a matter of perspective. From the party-state's perspective, the very existence of the secret church was oppositional and a threat. In 1988, the *Keston News Service* (KNS) reported

that *Rudé Právo* and *Pravda*, the two main dailies in Czechoslovakia, had jointly published an article entitled “The Secret Church in the Service of Anticommunism” on February 11 and 12, 1988. The *KNS* analyst explained that this article was one of several at that time attacking the “secret church” and its “illegal church structures” in Slovakia and that the article accused Slovak Catholic activists of using religion as a political tool against the state.<sup>99</sup> The leaders of the secret church in principle denied any association with the political opposition, as well as any suggestion that they were a church separate from the Catholic Church as implied by the words “secret” and “illegal.” Instead, the spiritual development of Slovakia’s Catholics had been the primary concern of the secret church’s founders.

The arrest and trial preparations of the Bratislava Five served as a rallying sequence of events for the archipelago in Slovakia. In addition to establishing Kusý and Čarnogurský as prominent oppositional leaders in Slovakia, it also strengthened the ties between the various streams of independent activity in Slovakia and helped HOS achieve its goal of organizing a unified position for political reform. It laid the foundation for many Slovak intellectuals who had kept their distance from the Czech-oriented political opposition of Charter 77 to become active against the party-state politically in Slovakia. While also a unifying framework for grassroots groups in Leipzig in the lead-up to the fall 1989 revolution, Leipzig’s archipelago was much more fraught with tensions. Spiritual development had not been a primary objective of any of Leipzig’s church-based groups, though all of their interests had been grounded on Christian theology. The shift toward political opposition within the archipelago reprised many of the tensions between the church and the church-sponsored groups. As the centerpiece of Leipzig’s archipelago, the content of the weekly prayer-for-peace services at the Nikolaikirche became a source of contention. For many activists in Leipzig’s groups, the church had begun to resemble aspects of the party-state in its efforts to control the content of the services. The streets, rather than the protective cover of the church, began to emerge for many as a space where activists could act and speak freely.

The distinct organizational structures and locations of the archipelagos in Slovakia and East Germany shaped the role that religion and church institutions played in the final events leading to the 1989 revolutions. The

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<sup>99</sup> “Czechoslovak Press Condemns ‘Secret Church’ Activities,” *KNS*, no. 296 (17 March 1988): 5.

archipelago in Leipzig was embedded within the institutional structure of the Evangelical Church. As religious freedom had not been a central goal of grassroots activity in East Germany, the church as a religious institution had helped establish networks and organizational ties between all of the different interest groups in cities such as Leipzig and was at the heart of the archipelago. However, in Slovakia—where the narrower focus on religious freedom had been the primary objective of the secret church and its supporters in the Catholic Church—the church as an institution failed to become the organizational umbrella of an archipelago composed of many elements not guided by religious freedom. While Slovak environmentalists, political dissidents and cultural producers shared common cause with believers against the party-state, religious belief and religious institutions—even in more devout Slovakia—were insufficient glue for the archipelago. In other words, religious dissent was not a unifying component of either the East German or Slovak archipelagos. While Slovakia's archipelago was much more grounded on personal networks between members of different streams of activity whose ties were strengthened by the unifying event of the arrest of the Bratislava Five, Leipzig's archipelago had an institutional and organizational structure located within the Evangelical Church. As such, it became an archipelago subject to the centripetal forces of the church seeking to centralize control over the church-sponsored groups and the centrifugal forces of the younger, more radical groups finding ways to break outside of the church's moderating influence. The result—as chapter 7 presents—was a church institution at the heart of the revolution in East Germany versus a church as simply one component of the revolution in Slovakia.



## CHAPTER 7

# The Revolutions of 1989

While Poland and Hungary experienced what Timothy Garton Ash has described as “refolutions” in 1989, the political leadership of Czechoslovakia and East Germany resisted the reform policies of glasnost and perestroika recommended by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the revolutions that destroyed the power of the party-state began in the streets in each country in the fall of 1989. This chapter examines the role of the secret church in Slovakia and the grassroots groups in Leipzig in the final confrontation with state power and the collapse of Communism.

In Czechoslovakia, the Velvet Revolution began suddenly and unexpectedly with the violent police response to a peaceful student demonstration in Prague on November 17, 1989. Though the start of the revolution caught both Czech and Slovak dissidents by surprise, neither was unprepared, including Slovak Catholics. The secret church certainly did not instigate the revolution in Czechoslovakia, but its opposition and networks easily converged with the activities of Public Against Violence and Civic Forum and became part of the revolution in three ways. First, the most active members of the Slovak secret church, such as Mikloško and Čarnogurský, had gained both political experience and public exposure in the 1980s. With his trial less than a week away at the start of the revolution, Čarnogurský had become one of the most well-known dissidents in Slovakia. Second, through the HOS manifesto and the proposed reforms of the constitution, both the Czech and Slovak opposition movements already had a clear program of reform in hand. Many elements of this program had already been promoted through the secret church’s petition campaigns, particularly the 31-point petition, and leaders of the secret church who became involved in Public Against Violence already had spe-

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<sup>1</sup> Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern*, 14.

cific demands to advance during the revolution and transition period. Finally, the organization, networks, activities, and goals of the Slovak secret church developed prior to 1989 continued to contribute to the development of new political and social institutions after the revolution.

In the former East Germany, many Leipzigers would argue that the revolution began in their city in the fall of 1989, rather than in (East) Berlin. In the spring of 1990—after the revolution and before German reunification—the interim GDR government issued a stamp celebrating Leipzig's role in the 1989 revolution. The stamp depicts the Nikolaikirche in Leipzig surrounded by crowds of people with banners and signs (“We are the People”) to commemorate the role of the prayer-for-peace services in the revolution. Attendance at the weekly prayer-for-peace services, which had been only 10–20 people in 1982, grew dramatically in the fall of 1989 with 70,000 people attending on October 9 and 300,000 by the end of the month. In Leipzig, prayers had quite visibly turned into protests.<sup>2</sup> Activists had increasingly found ways to take their environmental, cultural, and even political concerns from inside of the churches out into the streets. While the opening of the Berlin wall on November 9, 1989 signaled the collapse of the iron curtain and the East German state, the party-state's response (rather, non-response) to the October 9 demonstration following the weekly prayer-for-peace service at the Nikolaikirche shifted the balance of power. By not pursuing a violent solution (i.e., Tiananmen Square) in Leipzig, the party-state in hindsight can be seen to have already given up its willingness to use the resources of state authority to preserve power a month before opening the wall. As in Czechoslovakia, the non-violent path of the revolution in the fall of 1989 was guided and shaped by many of the pre-existing networks and structures created through the grassroots church-sponsored organizations of the 1980s. While leaders in the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia quickly issued statements in support of the revolution, pastors and clergy played a more active role in the East German revolution as founders of new movements, moderators of roundtables, and politicians in new parties.

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<sup>2</sup> Timothy Garton Ash describes Leipzig as the “epicenter.” Ibid., 67–73. See also Philip-  
sen, *We Were the People*. For a visual documentation of signs and banners used by de-  
monstrators in Leipzig, see *Leipziger Demontagebuch*.



## Public Against Violence: From the Telephones to the Streets

Following the start of the Velvet Revolution in Prague, the streams of independent activity, their demands or programs, and their networks, all created before November 17, were brought together under the coordination of Public Against Violence in Slovakia. Pre-existing personal relationships played a critical role in the quick formation of Public Against Violence. As reports of the violent response of the police to the student demonstration in Prague reached Slovakia, artists, dissidents and other intellectuals organized a meeting at the *Umelecká beseda*, a small art gallery across from Comenius University in Bratislava, for 5:00 p.m. on Sunday, November 19. Zuzana Szatmáry, an engineer and unofficial artist, had watched Austrian TV's coverage of the events in Prague the day before and received a phone call from a friend informing her of the meeting, which she attended after some deliberation.<sup>3</sup> Miloš Žiak, who received the phone call from writer Andrej Ferko, spread the word by telephoning Fedor Gál, Martin Šimečka, and Boris Zala.<sup>4</sup> Martin Šimečka also telephoned Budaj and Mikloško. Mikloško, following the strategy of not engaging in open political activity to protect the secret church, chose not to attend.<sup>5</sup> One recipient of a phone call later explained, "At that time there was no other way [to announce the meeting.] And the people called only those whom they trusted. Friend called friend because it was a very, very dangerous situation at that time. The people were nervous. The people were angry."<sup>6</sup> Most accounts estimated that 500 people had gathered in an exhibition room at the *Umelecká beseda*, and they issued a short statement protesting the violence in Prague and calling for an end to Stalinist methods.<sup>7</sup> Zuzana Szatmáry remembers that since there were so many people in the room, the woman working at the gallery kept shouting at them to be careful of the paintings hanging on the wall. She recalled that at the end of the meeting, the participants marked the occasion by signing the visitor book of the art exhibition.<sup>8</sup> After a second meeting at the *Umelecká beseda* on November 20, Public

<sup>3</sup> Zuzana Szatmáry, interview by author, Bratislava, Slovakia, 17 August 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Žiak, *Slovensko: Od komunizmu kam?* 20–21. Fedor Gál describes receiving the phone call from Žiak and attending this first meeting in Gál, *Z prvej ruky*, 18–19.

<sup>5</sup> Mikloško discusses this phone call from Martin Šimečka and his decision not to attend in Mikloško, *Čas stretnutí*, 156.

<sup>6</sup> M., interview by author, 18 August 1997, Bratislava, Slovakia.

<sup>7</sup> Žatkuliak, *November 1989 a slovensko*, 324.

<sup>8</sup> Szatmáry, interview. I have tried (unsuccessfully) to locate this record of attendance.

Against Violence (VPN) issued its first statement, announced its coordinating committee and spokespersons, and began directing the demonstrations and strikes that students, workers, and artists were organizing in Bratislava and throughout Slovakia.<sup>9</sup>

Like Civic Forum in the Czech lands, VPN was a broad movement created to coordinate the revolution in Slovakia. Representatives from VPN's coordinating committee began leading the large demonstrations in Bratislava's SNP square. One spokesperson for VPN, recalled that he traveled by car to the High Tatras, Martin, and other cities in Slovakia, asking people to demonstrate against Communism. In many cases, he spoke in theaters where actors had organized meetings and demonstrations. Not knowing what to do next, they had asked VPN for help. He also visited strike committees in factories. At the large Slovnaft refinery in Bratislava, loyal members of the Communist party had set up rival "VPN committees" to confuse the workers. The head of the strike committee, a friend of the VPN representative, asked for help, so he went to Slovnaft to identify which strike committees were really associated with VPN and which were illegitimate.<sup>10</sup> On November 25, Public Against Violence issued a program that outlined twelve demands, including the end of the leading role of the Communist party. Several demands reflected the interests of different streams of independent activity such as thorough separation of Church and state, the right to a clean natural environment, and that culture be removed from state control.<sup>11</sup>

As previously noted, the start of the Velvet Revolution had caught the opposition in both Slovakia and the Czech lands by surprise. In Slovakia, activists in the political opposition had their sights on organizing some activity on December 10 for the Day of Human Rights, and in the Czech lands even Václav Havel was spending the weekend at his cottage outside of Prague. The formation of Public Against Violence, whose founding members had initially been brought together through a series of phone calls among friends, had demonstrated the importance of personal contacts and friendships established prior to November 17.

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<sup>9</sup> "Verejnosť proti násiliu," Bratislava, November 20, 1989, CSDS: Dokumenty CSSR 16.11.1989-podnech: 22.11.89. The names of the coordinating committee was announced in "Občianska iniciatíva VEREJNOSŤ PROTI NÁSILIU," Bratislava, November 22, 1989, CSDS: Dokumenty CSSR 16.11.1989-podnech: 22.11.1989.

<sup>10</sup> M., interview.

<sup>11</sup> "Programové vyhlásení občianskej iniciatívy 'Verejnosť proti násiliu' a Koordinaceho výbor Slovenských vysokoskolakov," CSDS: Dokumenty CSSR 16.11.1989-podnech: 25.11.89.

Public Against Violence and Civic Forum both became broad movements, were politically-oriented and founded at the same time, but in many ways were quite different. Unlike the leaders of Civic Forum, the leaders of VPN in Slovakia were relatively unknown to the public and unacquainted with each other. In the mid-1990s, former dissidents, such as Kusý and Martin Šimečka, felt that the revolution occurred too early for Slovakia.<sup>12</sup> Closer ties were developing between the various streams of independent activity, but the emerging leadership was not sufficiently acquainted with one another by November 1989. Although this argument appears directed at explaining how a political unknown such as Vladimír Mečiar, an authoritarian leader and opponent of civil society in the post-1989 period, came to power, it does support the notion of a Slovak variant of dissent. Slovakia's culture of political dissent was less developed than that in the Czech lands, so members of Slovakia's post-Communist political leadership were less experienced in presenting and defending their views. Many of those meeting at the *Umelecká beseda* in Bratislava were meeting one another for the first time. Miroslav Kusý describes this difference between Civic Forum and VPN: "In [Civic Forum] were the politicians whose profile was known from dissent [*sic*]. Most of them, [Václav] Havel, [Jiří] Dienstbier, and all the famous people of this [Civic Forum] have some political past. But the people coming to this movement in Slovakia were people without [a] political past. We knew not [*sic*] each other. All the people were coming from some institutions. The politically active [dissidents] were only me, Ján Čarnogurský in the Christian movement, Milan Šimečka—that is all practically. That is to say this was the difference between the two movements. And also [Vladimír] Mečiar was coming in the second wave also as an innocent man... nobody knew him."<sup>13</sup> Though Kusý refers to Čarnogurský as a member of VPN, he did not become involved in VPN until his release from prison several days after the movement's foundation.

The background of the first twenty-three members of VPN's coordinating committee and spokespersons announced on November 22 reflects the "non-dissident" background of VPN's leadership. Of the eleven member of the working coordinating committee, only Ján Budaj had a background in opposition activities, and even his work in the environmental movement had been restrained to avoid contact with the political opposition. Instead, individuals who had been working in official

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<sup>12</sup> Kusý, interview. Šimečka, interview.

<sup>13</sup> Kusý, interview.

institutions, such as Martin Bútora, Fedor Gál, and Milan Kňažko, numbered among the most prominent members of VPN. Among the spokespersons, only Kusý, Žiak, and Martin Šimečka had been prominent in independent activity in Slovakia.<sup>14</sup>

## Church and Revolution

Though leading figures from the Slovak secret church were noticeably absent from VPN's leadership in the first days of the revolution, the leading representatives of Czechoslovakia's formal church hierarchy, drawing strength and legitimacy from the earlier successes of the Slovak secret church, offered the Church's moral support to the revolution. On November 22, *Lidová demokracie* published a statement issued by Cardinal Tomášek the previous day that offered strong support for political change. In his statement, Tomášek referred to the government's refusal to respond to demands of believers that the Slovak secret church had coordinated in the 1980s, "Only when the Catholic people in their hundreds of thousands raised their voices in Velehrad in 1985 and with the petition of 1988 was there some insignificant progress." Cardinal Tomášek used the government's failure to respond to the demands made at Velehrad and the 31-point petition to justify his own appeal for a new government. Citing problems in science, culture, and political affairs, Tomášek urged "We should wait no longer; we must act. We need a democratic government..."<sup>15</sup> In fact, four new bishops—two in the Czech lands and two in Slovakia—had been approved by both the Vatican and the Czechoslovak government in July 1989 and consecrated the following month.<sup>16</sup> On November 22, Archbishop Metropolitan of Slovakia Ján Sokol, one of the new bishops, issued his own formal protest of the violence in Prague, "Believe me that it was with great pain that I learned of the brutal violence of our security units against peace-loving Christians on March 25, 1988 in Bratislava, and on our country's young citizens on November 17, 1989, in

<sup>14</sup> "Občianska iniciatíva VEREJNOSŤ PROTI NÁSILIU," Bratislava, November 22, 1989, CSDS: Dokumenty CSSR 16.11.1989-podnech: 22.11.89. Fedor Gál, one of the early leaders of VPN, supports Kusý's observations that most leading members of VPN came from official institutions, identifying Kusý, Šimečka, and Budaj as the only "dissidents." Gál, *Z prvej ruky*, 22–23.

<sup>15</sup> This statement was published on November 22, 1989 in *Lidova demokracie*. For an English translation see Prečan, *The Democratic Revolution*, 181–182 (in the CSDS.)

<sup>16</sup> "Slovensko ma arcibiskupa!" *Katolícky mesačník* 9 (1989): 3.

Prague.”<sup>17</sup> Archbishop Sokol linked his protest of the violence against students in Prague several days earlier to the March 25 demonstration in Bratislava organized by the secret church over a year earlier. By doing so, he presented the revolution as relevant to Slovaks, particularly Catholics and members of the secret church who had experienced a similar violent response by the police.

The leadership of the Slovak secret church, while not engaged directly in Public Against Violence in the first days of the revolution, had already been protesting publicly for several weeks against the arrest and trial of Jan Čarnogurský. During his November 22–23 trial several thousand demonstrators mobilized by the Slovak secret church gathered in front of the Palace of Justice in Bratislava demanding his release. This protest, which coincided with the first two mass demonstrations moderated by VPN in Bratislava’s SNP square, became entwined with the progress of the Velvet Revolution in Slovakia. Public Against Violence made the release of Čarnogurský one of its early priorities. In a resolution introduced on the first day of Čarnogurský’s trial on November 22 during a gathering at SNP square, VPN issued seven demands to the Slovak Premier, one of which called for the release of all those “on trial for political reasons.”<sup>18</sup> One Slovak dissident, who lobbied for Čarnogurský’s release on behalf of Public Against Violence, explained the importance of Čarnogurský and the arrest of the Bratislava Five: “It was the worst step the Communists did. They put to jail two different leaders—Čarnogurský and Kusý—because they wanted to stop all the streams. [But] they put them together, one former reform Communist and liberal with a traditional Catholic. So Čarnogurský was the symbol of this coming together. From that time we went step by step together, so then the idea was to release Čarnogurský as a symbol.”<sup>19</sup> On November 23, Alexander Dubček, who had observed Čarnogurský’s trial, walked out of the courtroom. He made his first public announcement since August 27, 1968 by picking up a megaphone to declare his membership in VPN and to urge the demonstrators to remain peaceful. That evening he appeared with VPN during the demonstration in SNP square.<sup>20</sup> Mikloško, in addition to attending the trial of Čarnogurský, also attended the demonstrations in SNP

<sup>17</sup> Prečan, *The Democratic Revolution*, 191. For the original text, see CSDS: Dokumenty CSSR 16.11.1989-podnech: 21.11.1989.

<sup>18</sup> Prečan, *The Democratic Revolution*, 195.

<sup>19</sup> M., interview. Miloš Žiak discusses the significance of the arrest of Čarnogurský and Kusý in Žiak, *Slovensko: od komunismus kam?* 24.

<sup>20</sup> Craig Wolff, “Despite Emotional Return, Dubcek’s Style Remains Low-Key,” *New York Times*, 25 November 1989. See also Žiak, *Slovensko: od Komunismus kam?* 40.

square where Ján Budaj and Milan Kňažko were directing the protests as members of VPN's coordinating committee. Following one of these early demonstrations, Mikloško ran into Budaj who invited him to become a member of VPN's coordinating committee. Mikloško, deciding to engage in open political activity, agreed to join VPN and on November 24 appeared alongside Budaj, Kusý, and Ľubomír Feldek in VPN's first television appearance.<sup>21</sup>

For Mikloško, the Velvet Revolution had facilitated his transition into open political activity. For Čarnogurský, the transition from jail to politics was equally dramatic. Though his defense lawyer reported as early as November 23 that Čarnogurský would be released, it did not become official until November 25 when President Husák formally called for his release at the urging of several human rights organizations in Prague. Husák also amnestied several individuals, including the Slovak Catholic samizdat publisher Ivan Polanský.<sup>22</sup> Čarnogurský immediately became one of the leading figures in the political opposition in Slovakia. After his release, he traveled to Prague to represent Public Against Violence during consultations with Václav Havel and other members of Civic Forum. On December 5, along with Ján Budaj and Milan Kňažko, he represented Public Against Violence during the joint VPN and Civic Forum meeting to negotiate the transfer of power from the Communist party to an interim government. On December 7, representatives from Civic Forum and Public Against Violence made public a letter it had delivered earlier that day to Premier Adamec with the proposed composition of the Federal Government. The letter's first recommendation announced: "For the office of one of the First Deputy Premiers of the Federal Government we recommend Dr. Ján Čarnogurský, whom you have already had an opportunity to meet personally. He is a young Slovak democrat, capable of quick and constructive action, an experienced lawyer whose authority is based mainly on his Christian background."<sup>23</sup> Later that day during a press conference, Václav Havel expressed his hope that Čarnogurský would head the government after the resignation of Ladislav Adamec: "Ján Čarnogurský has never held a government post in Slovakia; he is seen as a legitimate representative of the people's will."<sup>24</sup> On December 10, President

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<sup>21</sup> Mikloško, *Čas stretnutí*, 158–159.

<sup>22</sup> "Proceedings Against Čarnogurský, Others halted," 25 November 1989, OSA: Dissident/personalities/Čarnogurský. Also see Žiak, *Slovensko: od komunismu kam?* 40–41.

<sup>23</sup> Prečan, *The Democratic Revolution*, 291–293.

<sup>24</sup> "Havel Backs Čarnogurský to Head Government," *FBIS*, 8 December 1989, 5.

Husák, in one of his last acts as president, formally appointed Čarnogurský as First Deputy Premier.

In contrast to the publicity that it gave to Slovak pilgrimages and the 31-point petition campaign, the Slovak secret church's samizdat network played a relatively minor role in publicizing VPN's announcements and mobilizing its members to take public action in support of the revolution. For most of the samizdat editors, who published four to five issues a year, the revolution was over before their next issues were released. Even the monthly periodical *Katolícky mesačník*, which carried a VPN announcement of the November 27 general strike, only did so in time for the December issue, too late to impact the mobilization of its readers for the strike.<sup>25</sup> The Czech religious samizdat periodical *Informace o církvi*, also a monthly, was the only samizdat periodical to publish the text of Archbishop Sokol's November 22 letter.<sup>26</sup>

The significance of the Slovak secret church in the Velvet Revolution lies less in what its members did during the revolution, but rather what it had built and established before the revolution and what the Slovak secret church became after the revolution. The pilgrimages, the petitions, and the March 25, 1988 demonstration had demonstrated the increasing strength of the Slovak secret church in the 1980s. In the Czech lands, Charter 77 had emphasized the importance of a moral program, of living in truth, to overcome the Communist party's efforts to restrict society. In Slovakia, the secret church had done this, creating a space where Slovakia's Catholics could worship free of state control. Through these activities, some of its members, particularly Čarnogurský and Mikloško, gained political experience in formulating demands and organizing public activities. By the time of the Velvet Revolution, and through his broader engagement in the political activities of HOS, Čarnogurský had emerged as a political leader with strong support from other spheres of independent activity. In addition to creating political elites, the secret church produced religious leaders, priests, organizations, and a press free of any collaboration with the Communist regime had evolved. It was ready to enjoy its new legal status after November 1989.

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<sup>25</sup> *Katolícky mesačník* 12 (1989): 8.

<sup>26</sup> "Prohlášení Metropolitě Slovenska," *Informace o církvi* 12 (1989): 29. (In some copies of this issue, the text of the letter appeared on page 10.)

## Leipzig: An Epicenter of the East German Revolution

By the beginning of September 1989, Leipzig's archipelago of independent activity had already begun shifting from the churches into the streets. It included moderate groups, such as AG Friedensdienst and AG Umweltschutz, as well as the more politically active members of AK Gerechtigkeit and IG Leben. These more aggressive groups had spent the previous two years attempting to extend their activity beyond the church's sphere of influence. The emigration seekers had already found the prayer-for-peace services in Leipzig as a place where they could gather and publicize their situation. Since 1988, their arrival had begun to transform the role and character of these services. The mass emigration of East Germans to the West via Hungary in the summer of 1989 acted as further catalyst to bring independent activity out of the protective bonds of the church by inspiring the formation of New Forum on September 9, 1989.

Founded in East Berlin by thirty intellectuals and artists from all over the GDR, New Forum hoped to stem the flow of emigration by introducing a program of political and economic reform designed to make socialism more responsive to the needs of East Germans. Several pastors and theologians, as well as members of church-based groups in the GDR were among New Forum's founding members.<sup>27</sup> New Forum, however, had no formal affiliation with the Evangelical Church. In its first two weeks, an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 East Germans joined New Forum by signing its founding declaration. Although the state refused to grant New Forum's request for legal status and banned the group, its membership throughout the GDR continued to increase.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> For the text of its September 9, 1989 declaration and list of founding members, "Aufbruch 89—Neues Forum," in *Die ersten Texte des Neuen Forum* (Berlin, January 1990), 1–2, HA-S-PG4(1)–65. One founding member of New Forum, interviewed at the end of October 1989, emphasized the influence of the young East Germans leaving the GDR by way of Hungary on New Forum's development. "Interview with New Forum founder," *SWB*, 30 October 1989.

<sup>28</sup> "East Germany's newest opposition group seeks official recognition," *The Guardian*, 20 September 1989, 10; "New Forum' refused registration," *SWB*, 23 September 1989. Supporters of New Forum reportedly reached 3,000 in less than two weeks, see "Hardliners still have upper hand as Berlin reformers press case," *The Times* [London], 23 September 1989, 9. Estimates at the end of September placed membership in New Forum at about 4,200. See "East Germany cracks down on reform group," *The Guardian*, 26 September 1989 and "8,000 protest at E. German crackdown on reform group," *Telegraph*, 26 September 1989, 10.



Back in November 1983, a small group of young people had left a prayer-for-peace service at the Nikolaikirche during the Friedensdekade with lit candles. They marched through the city to place the candles at the former site of a synagogue that had been destroyed by the Nazis during *Kristallnacht*.<sup>29</sup> For several years, post-prayer-for-peace service activity, however, had remained an isolated incident. As the popularity of the prayer-for-peace services at the Nikolaikirche increased between the spring of 1988 and the fall of 1989, participants began gathering outside of the Nikolaikirche after the services and walking through the city in what later became known as “Monday Demonstrations.”

Christian Dietrich and Uwe Schwabe, using estimates from official (state or police reports) and unofficial (participant accounts, samizdat) sources, tracked attendance at the prayer-for-peace services between March 1988 and October 1989. Their estimates for the spring and fall of 1988 reveal that these sources are incomplete and even contradictory. For example, while unofficial sources placed 400 people at a demonstration following the prayer-for-peace service on March 14, 1988, city officials reported that only 120 people participated. No estimates are available until September and October 1988 and indicate that only 50 to 150 people demonstrated after the prayer-for-peace services during this period. Attendance estimates are not available until the period from May 1989 to July 3, 1989 (the last prayer-for-peace service before the summer break). During this nine week period attendance at the prayer-for-peace services ranged from 450–1,000 people and attendance at the Monday Demonstrations ranged from 40 to 250 people. It is unclear why attendance varied so dramatically and these numbers suggest that attendance levels at the Monday Demonstrations were not directly connected to the number of people who attended the prayer-for-peace services that preceded it. For example, an estimated 650 people attended the prayer-for-peace service on June 26, 1989, but only 40 people attended the Monday Demonstration afterwards. The following week, July 3, attendance at the prayer-for-peace services increased to 800 people, but an estimated 250 people attended the Monday Demonstration.<sup>30</sup> The Monday Demonstrations gradually helped build an important bridge linking the activities developing within the protected space of the church with the unprotected space of Leipzig’s streets. As has been well documented, attendance at the Monday Demonstrations in-

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<sup>29</sup> Kaufmann, *Sorget nicht*, 203–211.

<sup>30</sup> Dietrich and Schwabe constructed a chart that indicates the date and attendance estimates from different sources. See Dietrich, *Freunde und Feinde*, 487.

creased significantly from a few thousand in September 1989 to 25,000 on October 2; 70,000 on October 9; over 120,000 on October 16; and 300,000 on October 23 and October 30.<sup>31</sup> As public events outside of the Evangelical Church's protection, the participants in these demonstrations were protected instead by their sheer size. The Monday Demonstration on October 9, 1989 is considered by many activists and scholars as the most important. They point to the local authorities' decision to not respond with violence against the demonstrators as a critical turning point in the success of the revolution.<sup>32</sup>

Though small in size, Leipzig's church-based groups had developed associations, leadership, programs, networks, and a space to meet (the prayer-for-peace services at the Nikolaikirche) prior to 1989. The leaders of the political change in Leipzig were people who had gained leadership experience in Leipzig's church-based groups in the previous decade. Michael Arnold, the only founding member of New Forum from Leipzig, had been a member of IG Leben.<sup>33</sup> As New Forum began to develop regional groups in October, Arnold, along with Jochen Läßig, were elected as two of the seven spokespersons for New Forum in Leipzig. Edgar Dussdal, also elected as a spokesperson for New Forum in Leipzig, had first become involved in independent activity in Leipzig as a member of AG Friedensdienst in the early 1980s.<sup>34</sup> Although three of New Forum's founding members in September 1989 were pastors, none of Leipzig's pastors or superintendents joined New Forum's leadership. Many of the issues and demands articulated at the Monday Demonstrations by New Forum's spokespersons and others had already been outlined by Leipzig's church-sponsored groups in the preceding months and years. Following the opening of the wall on November 9, East Germany began a rapid transition to democracy, capitalism and reunification with West Germany. The revolution in East Germany proceeded so quickly that if these ele-

<sup>31</sup> *Forum für Kirche und Menschenrechte* 2 (3 November 1989): 54.

<sup>32</sup> For accounts of the importance of the October 9 Monday Demonstration, see Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern*; Opp, *Origins of a Spontaneous Revolution*; and Kuhn, *Der Tag der Entscheidung*. Pastor Führer, still at the Nikolaikirche, has led an initiative to make October 9 a federal holiday in Germany.

<sup>33</sup> ABL 4.28.3. This founding appeal with names also appears in a collection of New Forum's documents published by New Forum in January 1990. See "Aufbruch 89—NEUES FORUM," 1–2.

<sup>34</sup> For their first meeting and the structure of New Forum in Leipzig, see ABL 4.28.28. For the text of their first statements, see ABL 4.28.21 and ABL 4.28.38. See also Neues Forum Leipzig, *Jetzt oder nie*.

ments of civil society had not already developed, there would not have been time to create them during the revolution. Oliver Kloth, a theology student and member of AK Gerechtigkeit in Leipzig, argued that the speed of the revolution even undermined New Forum. He explained that at the time of its foundation, New Forum had virtually no organizational structure. As its membership grew rapidly in the following months, it did not have the time to develop a structure that could coordinate its membership and stay ahead of the revolution.<sup>35</sup>

## Summary

Leipzig sociologists Karl-Dieter Opp, Peter Voss, and Christiane Gern have regarded the events in that city as evidence of a “spontaneous revolution.” Indeed, the revolutions in East Germany and Czechoslovakia were characterized by their speed and by the participation of citizens who had not previously been involved in grassroots activity. Their research highlights the function of the weekly prayer-for-peace services as a “coordinating mechanism” that helped bring these citizens into the streets. While many of the important revolutionary turning points were unanticipated and appeared to happen spontaneously, the pre-existing archipelagos of independent activity in Leipzig and Slovakia played a critical role in facilitating the course and program of each revolution. In Slovakia, the summer schedule of pilgrimages had already finished and it is impossible to know if the free spaces that had emerged through those events would have played the revolutionary role that the prayer-for-peace services did in Leipzig.

Given the speed of the fall 1989 events in Slovakia and the GDR and the party-state’s collapse in each country, it is clear that religious-based activism had helped construct a pre-existing framework of dissent (with personalities, networks, programs, and even some experience in confronting state power) that supported the hastily-organized New Forum and Public Against Violence. There was simply no time to develop such programs, networks or experience in the fall of 1989. In Leipzig, though churches were focal points on the ground for the revolution, the Christian theology that had influenced the discourse on peace and the environment throughout the decade appears to have been reduced to an emphasis on non-violence in the streets during the revolution. In this case, visions of a

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<sup>35</sup> Kloth, interview.

third way between socialism and capitalism that reflected much of the Christian theological orientation of the church-sponsored groups in the 1980s were pushed aside in the high speed rush for German reunification, which simply imported West German economic and political systems. Neither revolution was in any way a religious revolution, though Slovak Catholics were heavily mobilized by a desire for religious freedom. Religious-dissent did not bring about the revolution, though it had engaged immeasurable numbers of citizens in each state in non-conformist activity before the revolutions began.

The 1989 revolutions in Czechoslovakia and East Germany—as in the rest of the Soviet Bloc—exposed the weakness of state power. In hindsight, there was much evidence throughout the 1980s of the frailty of the party-state. From the experience of Slovak Catholic activists and East Germans involved in church-sponsored grassroots activity, the revolutions were the culmination of a decade of broadening civic involvement in non-conformist activities, the creation and expansion of new free spaces where state power could be challenged, and a shift toward more politically-oppositional activity from regular people without backgrounds as “dissidents.” Interestingly, many of the Slovaks and East Germans interviewed for this study who had been involved in oppositional activity—such as former Bausoldat and founder of AG Friedensdienst Heinz Bächer and participants/witnesses to the Good Friday Demonstration in Bratislava Monika C. and Peter B.—did not view themselves as dissidents. Even active participants in the secret church viewed themselves as just being “Catholics,” rather than dissidents like Jan Čarnogurský. Yet, they each played critical roles in the support of activities that emerged in the religious sphere and publicly challenged the power of the party-state. Certainly, one of the important factors for the success of the revolution in each country became the participation of the masses and the involvement of everyday people as stakeholders and leaders in the revolutionary movements that were formed in the midst of the revolutionary events.

In terms of the role of the church institutions themselves in each revolution, the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia and the Evangelical Church in East Germany adopted distinct positions toward the transition away from the authoritarianism of the party-state. These positions reflected their divergent relationships toward state power that had emerged in the 1980s and that had surfaced in their relationships to the activities of secret church members and activists in church-sponsored groups. Both churches became advocates for non-violent revolutionary change against the party-state. In Slovakia, the revolution had taken place beyond the spaces of the

Catholic Church, but it had supported the revolution and transition to a western-style democracy. In East Germany, where churches throughout the country (not just in Leipzig) had served as meeting places during the revolution, many clergy—even those opposed to the party-state—began questioning the course of the revolution and whether some of the socialist values should be preserved. This discussion of a “third way” between capitalism/democracy and communism, a continuity of the Evangelical Church’s position as the third point of a triangle between the party-state and the church-sponsored groups, never surfaced in Slovakia. The “Church in Socialism” position adopted by the Evangelical Church in the early 1970s took hold for many clergy and became a more authentic position than descriptions of the church being “collaborationist” or “opportunistic” might suggest. In contrast to the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia, which by the end of the revolution was simply trying to restore itself to its pre-Communist status and use its record of resistance to establish the legitimacy of both church leaders and Christian politicians, many clergy with the Evangelical Church tried to take from the Communist period a social vision that it could adapt in the transition period. To the lament of these clergy, the fast pace of reunification under West German terms precluded the pursuit of such a “third way.” The Epilogue addresses these different paths of transition in greater detail.



## Conclusion

If the transition from prayers to protests were compared to running a race, the Slovak activists ran a marathon and the East German activists ran a relay race. The secret church's leadership in the late 1980s remained in the hands of Bishop Korec, Krčméry, and Jukl who valued endurance and since the 1940s and 1950s had dedicated their lives to building a protected space where Slovakia's Catholics could continue their spiritual development in the context of state repression. In contrast, the events in Leipzig resemble a relay race, with each new group continuing, but also expanding, the accomplishments of its predecessors. The Bausoldat circle of Helmut Wolff and Helmut Nitzsche had been transformed into AG Friedensdienst, which in turn passed on the baton to AK Gerechtigkeit, IG Leben, and finally New Forum. Each new group not only built on the opportunities created by the earlier groups, but also became more outspoken against the state's policies and more interested in expanding their scope of activities.

In terms of leadership and strategy, AG Friedensdienst and the Slovak secret church are quite similar, suggesting that generational differences and the local (Leipzig) versus national (Slovakia) nature of their context contributed to the different paths of activism they followed. The leadership of AG Friedensdienst and the secret church remained largely in the hands of the older founding fathers who had taken the first steps toward organizing each sphere of independent activity. These leaders included Helmut Wolff and Helmut Nitzsche in Leipzig and Ján Korec, Silvester Krčméry, and Vladimír Jukl in Slovakia who pursued a cautious strategy that kept AG Friedensdienst within the space of the Evangelical Church and the secret church separate from the political opposition. AG Friedensdienst, however, was only one of several small, local church-based groups, while the secret church had developed a broad Slovak-wide membership and organizational structure. Despite AG Friedensdienst's cau-

tious stance, new groups with younger members continued to develop in Leipzig with the support of the Evangelical Church. The young leaders of these new groups, without the burden of responsibility for a broader movement or the sense that they had much to lose, continued the momentum and became increasingly confrontational with the party-state.

The dates 1953, 1956, 1968, and 1981 have long been associated with the strength of state power in postwar East European studies. In each of these years, the party-state cracked down on grassroots mobilizations for political change from below or, as in the case of the 1968 Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia, against efforts to reform from above that were popularly received. In each instance, the party-state demonstrated that its authority was backed with guns and tanks.<sup>1</sup> Grzegorz Ekiert has challenged this notion of state power at these times of crisis, arguing that relationships between state and society were reshaped in the aftermath.<sup>2</sup> If three dates in this timeline that were meaningful to either Protestants or Catholics in the Soviet bloc—1966, 1983, and 1985—are considered, a somewhat different picture of the party-state's power emerges. On each of these dates, the churches of Poland, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia commemorated important anniversaries that illustrate limits to party-state power and a strengthening relationship between religious institutions, religious belief, and oppositional activity. In 1966 Poles commemorated the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christianity in Poland by concluding the nine-year long series of celebrations of the Great Novena. In 1983, the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Martin Luther's birthday was celebrated in the GDR. Two years later, in 1985, the Catholics in Czechoslovakia celebrated the 1,100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of St. Methodius in Velehrad. The Byzantine missionary Methodius, along with Cyril, had introduced Christianity (and the Slavic liturgy) to the Great Moravian Empire in the ninth century. Given the Polish Catholic Church's well-documented support of the Solidarity movement, a brief comparison of the Polish, East German, and Slovak cases illustrate many of the distinct accomplishments of religious-based activism in East Central Europe.

The 1983 and 1985 commemorations in East Germany and Czechoslovakia performed a similar function and share many features with the Great

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<sup>1</sup> For analysis of these events, see Arnulf Baring, *Uprising in East Berlin*; Tibor Méray, *Thirteen Days that Shook the Kremlin*; Király and Jónás, *The Hungarian Revolution*; Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*; Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc*; Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution*; Rothschild, *The Return to Diversity*; and Falk, *Dilemmas of Dissidence*.

<sup>2</sup> Ekiert, *The State Against Society*.



Novena. First, attendance estimates of the church-organized commemorations in Poland, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia reflect the failure of each regime to repress religion and the ability of church leaders to mobilize the population of their respective country. In Poland, a million pilgrims attended the opening mass of the Great Novena in Częstochowa in August 1956. Polish Catholics had an opportunity to see a copy of the Black Madonna as it toured the dioceses of Poland, and 40,000 Catholics attended the high mass in Gniezno (the first capital of Poland) in 1966 that concluded the Great Novena.<sup>3</sup> In Czechoslovakia, an estimated 100,000 to 250,000 pilgrims attended the celebration at Velehrad in 1985. Attendance at the seven church rallies organized by the Kirchenbund for the Luther Year celebrations in the GDR was equally high and over 100,000 East Germans attended the rally in Dresden on July 10, 1983.

Second, in each commemoration, the party-state competed with religious institutions and/or believers over the significance of the events, the interpretation of each country's history, and the role of religion in that history. Roman Catholicism in Poland and Czechoslovakia and Lutheranism in the GDR represented significant aspects of each country's pre-Communist history. Thus, religion functioned as an important bond that Poles, Slovaks, and East Germans could use to form ties with their fellow citizens to resist the party-state. The party leadership, in fact, attempted to co-opt this cultural heritage to strengthen its own position in each country. The Polish party-state was the least successful. The length (initiated in 1956 and extended to 1980) and the local character of the Great Novena drowned out most efforts of the Polish government to effectively present its interpretation of this celebration.<sup>4</sup> The contested nature of the commemorations became most evident during the pilgrimage to Velehrad. Resisting the state's efforts to turn the event into a celebration of St. Methodius' cultural contributions, the Catholic pilgrims, many of whom were not active in the secret church, asserted the religious significance of the saint and the pilgrimage. The pilgrims also used the public space to chant demands for greater religious freedom and a Papal visit. In the GDR, the church and state organized rival committees to prepare for the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Martin Luther's birth. The state, hoping to use Luther to strengthen the perception of a distinct East German national identity, emphasized progressive elements of Luther's past, such as his university

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<sup>3</sup> Kubik, *The Power of Symbols*, 110–117. Osa dedicates a chapter to the Great Novena. Osa, *Solidarity and Contention*, 59–80.

<sup>4</sup> Osa, *Solidarity and Contention*, 75.

reform and translation of the bible into German. The Evangelical Church instead focused on the theological and spiritual dimensions of Luther's work. In each case, the respective church effectively presented the religious dimension of the commemoration to large numbers of citizens and overcame the party-states' efforts to co-opt the event.

Finally, each commemoration led to the creation of a free space where Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, and East Germans could meet publicly and express their concerns and opinions free of state interference. Though the commemorations contributed to a religious revival in Poland and Czechoslovakia, vocal expressions of discontent with state policy originated from very different sources. In Poland, the Great Novena had been the vision of Cardinal Wyszyński, and despite the popular involvement of Polish Catholics during the commemoration, the church leadership (cardinal and bishops) set the tone of the commemoration. Cardinal Wyszyński, in a sermon given during the May Third celebrations in Częstochowa in 1966, presented Polish Catholicism as an alternative "in the face of a totalitarian threat to the nation..."<sup>5</sup> Even after the declaration of martial law in 1981, churches functioned as protected spaces where Poles could gather for independent activities such as lectures, art exhibitions, and performances. However, a Helsinki Watch Report on the situation made it clear that the types of activity permitted in each church depended on what the parish priest was willing to permit.<sup>6</sup> Slovakia's tradition of religious pilgrimages provided a pre-existing public space that members of the secret church could use to establish contact and share information with Catholics not involved in the secret church. In the context of the religious revival in Slovakia after the election of Pope John Paul II, the high attendance at pilgrimages offered participants safety in numbers. Though Cardinal Tomášek spoke about the religious significance of St. Methodius at Velehrad in Czechoslovakia in 1985, the secret church and pilgrims set the tone of the event and offered unscripted criticism of the state's policies. During the ceremony, the pilgrims had chanted "We Want the Holy Father!" and "We Want Religious Freedom!" The impromptu verbal exchange between the Minister of Culture and the pilgrims reflected the willingness of Catholics to direct criticism at state representatives. By introducing a night program to this annual tradition, the leaders of the secret church extended the length of the pilgrimage and increased its popularity among young people. While the Polish Church leadership used

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<sup>5</sup> Kubik, *The Power of Symbols*, 113.

<sup>6</sup> Toch, *Reinventing Civil Society*, 16–17.

the Great Novena to strengthen Polish Catholics against the party-state, in Czechoslovakia it was the believers who strengthened the Church leadership. Pilgrims, mobilized and encouraged by the secret church, used the opportunity of the commemoration to express criticism of the party-state, and in doing so, emboldened Cardinal Tomášek to take a more critical stance against the party-state.

In the GDR, the 1983 Luther Year celebrations had a less confrontational character than the commemorations in Poland and Czechoslovakia and only indirectly supported the work of the church-based groups. The party-state's interest in reinterpreting Luther brought public attention and financial support to the Evangelical Church, thus strengthening the church's status and role as a public forum where issues such as peace, military service, and state persecution of Christians could be discussed. Neither Bishop Werner Leich, head of the Kirchenbund and the Church's Luther Committee nor the church-based groups in Leipzig used the Luther Year celebrations to offer direct criticism of the state in the way that Cardinal Wyszyński had expressed it in his sermon in 1966 or the pilgrims had through their chants at Velehrad in 1985. While Bishop Leich and Cardinal Wyszyński both led churches that functioned as important mediators between state and society, the Kirchenbund leadership appears to have been more concerned with testing and preserving the bounds of its new relationship with the state, which it had negotiated just a few years earlier at the March 1978 summit. For the secret church in Slovakia, pilgrimages in the 1980s had become one of the few public forums where its members could gather publicly and in relative safety to express their religious beliefs. In contrast, by 1983, grassroots groups in the GDR had less of a need for such a public forum presented by the Luther Year celebrations. As illustrated through the case of Leipzig, many activists had already enjoyed several years of church-sponsorship and thus access to church-meeting rooms and publishing resources to express their concerns and interests publicly. While the autonomy of the churches in Poland and East Germany allowed for a public space beginning in the 1950s, the Czechoslovak Catholic Church could not offer the same protection. Only in the 1980s did the Slovak secret church begin carving out a public space that could offer some protection to participants through the restoration of the pilgrimage tradition.

So how had a church that had accommodated itself to the state, even calling itself a "Church in Socialism" and that had experienced extensive secularization, been able to support what would become oppositional activity? And, does this experience in the GDR help illustrate why Slovak

Catholics became more oppositional than Slovak Lutherans? There does not appear to be a theological factor for the role that activists supported by the Evangelical Church in the GDR would play in developing oppositional activity. The same can be said for Slovakia. Instead, cooperation and compromise between church and state appears to be the stronger factor in supporting the emergence of oppositional activity. By looking at the results of this cooperation at the local level, we see that spaces were created where Christians (of various denominations) could pursue non-conformist activities within certain boundaries. Those boundaries certainly changed over time, particularly as different generations expanded the nature and scope of those spaces. In the case of East Germany, all parties (church, party-state, and conscientious objectors) would agree that the decree creating the Bausoldat units was a compromise. Yet, the party-state and probably many in the church hierarchy did not anticipate the manner in which many former Bausoldaten continued to find ways to work for a theologically-grounded (Christian) vision of peace within their communities.

In the case of Slovakia, the terms “cooperation” and “compromise” hardly come to mind when reviewing the history of a religious structure that emerged in the underground in response to extensive state persecution of the church hierarchy. Yet, two examples of clergy in the official church hierarchy illustrate how compromise could contribute to the shift toward public oppositional activity. At the top of the church hierarchy in Czechoslovakia was František Cardinal Tomášek, the only bishop to have been secretly consecrated (1949) and later recognized as bishop by the party-state. The agreement that led to his official recognition required that he take an oath of loyalty to the state. He became Cardinal in 1977. His willingness to compromise with the party state—which appears to have resulted in passivity towards the party-state until the religious revival of the 1980s—put him in a position in which he could later bring support and legitimacy to the more politically oppositional activities of the secret church, such as the Good Friday Demonstration and the 31-point petition. At a lower rung of the church hierarchy is Father Karel Martinec, who as an officially recognized priest in a small town in western Slovakia, was a member of *Pacem in Terris* (the official priests organization). Yet, Martinec read the secret church’s samizdat and served a moderating role between pilgrims and local party-state authorities as the night program evolved at nearby Šaštín. Slovak religious samizdat even published the text of sermons he gave at pilgrimages in the 1980s. This study has only addressed two such clergy in specific terms, but others carried out a similar function in Slovakia. Cooperation with state authorities did not always

produce constructive results for Christians in either Slovakia or the GDR. As Father Martinec recalled, he was always concerned about the consequences of fulfilling the smallest requests for information the party-state authorities might ask of him.<sup>7</sup> Secret police files released in the 1990s revealed that Bishop Sokol had been listed as a “trusted person.” Though Bishop Sokol denied collaborating, he acknowledged that he had met with the secret police. Bishop Sokol’s experience illustrates how even questions of collaboration could have destructive consequences (to his reputation and legitimacy after 1989.)<sup>8</sup> Yet, compromise between church and state could produce real benefits for Christians. The secret church created a framework in which oppositional activity could be supported by those within the official church, often at the local level.

A hierarchy of needs shaped the priorities of grassroots activists in Czechoslovakia, the GDR, and Poland. Slovak Catholics initial, primary goal was to find a way around state restrictions on religion to pursue their spiritual development. Only in the 1980s, did their activity turn to confrontation with the party-state through protests and demands for religious freedom. East German Protestants—though theologically grounded and supported by the Evangelical Church—had a more secular orientation. The Evangelical Church had no need to organize secret or underground spiritual activities. Instead, it used its institutional status to provide resources and support to groups interested in a broad range of social issues that included environmental protection and peace.

Religious symbols of Catholicism, such as Pope John Paul II and the Virgin Mary, unified and engaged Catholics who had not been previously active in oppositional activity. The enormous moral significance of Pope John Paul II became clear during his first Papal visit to Poland in 1979. Czechoslovak Catholics unsuccessfully submitted petitions requesting a similar visit throughout the 1980s and pilgrims expressed their hope for a visit through their chants of “We Want the Holy Father” and “We Want the Pope!” at Velehrad, Šaštín, and other pilgrimage sites. Likewise, the Virgin Mary fulfilled a similar function during events commemorating each country’s religious heritage. While celebrating the Great Novena (1,000 years of Christianity) in Poland in 1966, the circulation of a copy the Black Madonna icon of Czestochowa reminded Poles of Poland’s

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<sup>7</sup> Martinec, interview.

<sup>8</sup> See Beata Balogová, “After 200 years, the Catholic Church gets a Makeover,” *The Slovak Spectator*, April 7, 2008 and Beata Balogová, “Archbishop’s Unexplained Sacking Prompts Dismay, Protests,” *The Slovak Spectator*, July 9, 2012.

Christian heritage and contributed to the spiritual renewal of Polish Catholics. Along with portraits of Pope John Paul II, copies of the icon appeared on Gate Two of the Gdańsk shipyard gate during the August 1980 strike.<sup>9</sup> As Jan Kubik explains, one of the features that made “the discourse of Polish Catholicism” a “powerful weapon” and source of political legitimacy for Solidarity was that it had “developed symbolic means to anchor the political in the ethical and in the religious. For example, the Black Madonna of Częstochowa is the ultimate protectress of national survival and sovereignty...”<sup>10</sup> In Slovakia, the Pope’s designation of the period from June 7, 1987 to August 15, 1988 as a “Marian Year” or “Year of Mary” inspired the leaders of the secret church to organize a year-long program of spiritual renewal that included special pilgrimage commemorations. The Slovak secret church used its samizdat network to inform readers about the thirty-two Marian pilgrimage sites in Slovakia and over 150,000 pilgrims attended the final pilgrimage of this celebration in Nitra. Just as Cardinal Wyszyński used the traditional elements of Polish Catholicism to build mass support during the Great Novena, the secret church successfully drew on the potential of pilgrimages and the Marian cult to appeal to rank and file Catholics. While the Evangelical Church did not benefit from the importance of John Paul II and other symbols of Roman Catholicism, it developed its own set of symbols to mobilize East Germans. Most notably, this included the Swords into Ploughshares badge introduced during the Peace Week in 1980. In addition to the graphic of a man hammering a sword into a ploughshare, the badge included the biblical reference (Micah 4) that had been the inspiration of the imagery. The ironic strength of this symbol came from the fact that the graphic depicted on the badge was based on a statue of the same name presented to the United Nations by the Soviet Union in 1961. By adopting and modifying the use of this image, peace activists in the GDR co-opted one of the Soviet Union’s own symbols.

The Pope’s visit to Poland had demonstrated the potential of religious events to attract popular support of non-believers. The highly attended masses of his visit—an estimated 3 million Poles were present at the final mass—included non-believers.<sup>11</sup> In Czechoslovakia and the GDR, religious dissent also drew the support of non-believers, though not on the

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<sup>9</sup> Kubik, *Power of Symbols*, 195.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 252–253.

<sup>11</sup> Toch, *Reinventing Civil Society*, 15. For attendance estimates, see Kubik, *The Power of the Powerless*, 139.

same scale as in Poland. Members of the Slovak secret church and Leipzig's church-based groups demonstrated their ability to mobilize fellow citizens beyond their own membership prior to the political revolutions of 1989. The most visible expression of this mobilization in Slovakia was the collection of signatures for the 31-point petition between December 1987 and 1989. The Slovak secret church collected over half of the total 600,000 signatures. Equally impressive, the secret church mobilized an estimated 2,000 people to participate in the candlelight demonstration for greater religious and civil rights in Bratislava on March 25, 1988. In both cases, non-believers and/or individuals with no previous participation in the secret church participated in and supported the initiatives. Throughout the 1980s Leipzig's church-based groups had successfully mobilized East Germans to attend peace seminars, tree-planting initiatives, and bicycle trips to promote environmental awareness. During this same period, the prayer-for-peace services at the Nikolaikirche, organized by Leipzig's church-based groups, served as a space where East Germans—and not exclusively Lutherans—could meet free of state control to promote their interests. Attendance at these weekly services climbed to 2,500 by September 1989. The impact of church-based dissent in both countries was based on smaller, less ambitious initiatives that had begun decades earlier with more limited objectives. These activities that began as a quest for religious freedom in Slovakia and peace in the GDR culminated in social movements supported by broad segments of each state's populace.

Each case, therefore, reflects a broadening range of objectives and participation prior to 1989. Though the secret church had added respect for civil and political rights to its demands during the March 25, 1988 demonstration as means to broaden its appeal, the secret church itself was unable to broaden its own activities beyond these references. The result was a construction of an archipelago of independent activity. Individuals, such as Juraj Kohutiar, who had become interested in political issues, shifted their work from secret church to HOS. HOS became a step toward a broader movement (before formation of Civic Forum and Public Against Violence in November 1989.) In the GDR, the spheres of independent activity supported by the Evangelical Church demonstrated greater flexibility in responding to a broader range of issues. Though AG Friedensdienst had organized the first prayer-for-peace Services at the Nikolaikirche during the 1981 Friedensdekade, by the following year it had already begun seeking participation of other congregations and church-based groups. In the Slovak and East German cases, the different nature of their objectives is significant. Inherent in the understanding of peace by the inde-

pendent peace movement in the GDR is a broad definition of peace to include stability and health in a wide variety of areas: environment, poverty, reconciliation, women's rights, civil and human rights. In contrast, the Slovak secret church—which had strategic interests in focusing on religious issues and keeping a safe distance from the political opposition—only slightly broadened its program from demands for religious freedom to include respect for civil rights.

Religious-based activism in Czechoslovakia and the GDR mobilized citizens in two important ways. First, the religious orientation of the activities served the unifying role of bringing together intellectuals and workers, men and women (even children) from a variety of regions in pursuit of a common program. Second, in the 1980s, Slovak Catholics and East German Protestants that had been engaged in grassroots activities mobilized non-Catholics or non-Protestants—in some cases even atheists—who were drawn to the broader critiques of the political system that were being expressed. Participation in Leipzig's church-based groups was open to Catholics, other Protestants and non-believers who were interested in the groups' priorities. In the more traditional and conservative Catholicism of Slovakia, the secret church activists framed their demands for religious freedom broadly enough (the 31-point Petition, the Good Friday Demonstration) that even atheists could support it. Recall Peter B., the young Slovak atheist who attended the Bratislava Demonstration. He was compelled to watch that demonstration from the sidelines not in the pursuit of spiritual goals, rather because of his frustrations with the political system and a desire to see what would happen (as there had been no other such demonstrations in Czechoslovakia). As this Slovak/East German comparison illustrates, activism that did not conform to the official position of the party-state that emerged in the religious sphere—when not remaining narrow or limited to spiritual goals—could mobilize non-believers. Its ability to mobilize is in stark contrast to Charter 77. Though one of the most prominent and important oppositional movements in the Soviet bloc, Charter 77's membership remained largely limited to a small group of intellectuals in Prague. Only three Slovaks signed the Charter in 1977.<sup>12</sup>

The distinct East German–West German relationship following the destructiveness of the Second World War gave the East German Evangelical Church greater latitude, particularly in regards to the issue of peace. This comparison of religious-based dissent reiterates many of the distinct as-

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<sup>12</sup> Skilling, *Charter 77*.



pects of the GDR's relationship to the Soviet bloc. As the Soviet-aligned part of a divided Germany, its political leadership had to reconcile two big paradoxes. First, it had to reconcile the relationship between militarization and peace. The divided Germany was the anticipated front line in a future Third World War against the capitalist West; therefore, the party-state argued that socialism needed to be armed to defend itself and to preserve peace. While peace was to be assured through armed socialism, the desire to be perceived as a state committed to peace (and therefore distinct from both the destructiveness of the Nazi past and the armed Federal Republic of Germany in the present) opened up possibilities for conscientious objectors that did not exist elsewhere in the Soviet bloc. For the party-state, militarization, socialism, and peace converged. For conscientious objectors, and later, many in the grass-roots groups, pursuit of an unarmed peace became the central agenda and ultimately provided a common foundation that helped link the efforts of environmentalists and peace activists. The pursuit of peace, rather than human rights, became central to East German dissent and opposition. Only in the last years of the GDR did grassroots groups begin adopting the theme of human rights, and these groups operated largely outside of the space of the Evangelical Church. While environmentalism did emerge within opposition elsewhere in the Soviet bloc, it was not grounded into a unifying theme (peace) or structure (Evangelical Church) as it was in the GDR. Slovak environmentalists had very limited contact with religious activists in the secret church or even the more politically oriented oppositional groups in Slovakia until the formation of HOS in the late 1980s.

The Evangelical Church's experience in East Germany is closer to that of the Catholic Church in Poland, though for different reasons that are related to the German-German relationship, and, again, the context of the Nazi past. The Evangelical Church hierarchy held onto much of its autonomy for a variety of reasons: its postwar reorganization with church leaders who had opposed Nazism as members of the Confessing Church (and often sat in prison cells alongside members of the Communist Party) gave it a favorable status other churches in the bloc did not have. The adoption of the "Church in Socialism" position in the early 1970s enhanced and brought official acknowledgment of the already existing social role of the church in East German society. The "Church in Socialism" designation suggests a monolithic notion of the church; as this analysis has illustrated, the Evangelical Church in the GDR was anything but a monolith. At the local level, pastors benefitted from the official status of the church but had considerable freedom to decide their level of support of grassroots initia-

tives and the range of activity that the sponsored groups could pursue. From a certain perspective, the party-state's policies against religious institutions in Czechoslovakia were successful and the various church hierarchies (Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox) were repressed and largely placed under state control. Yet, the secret church had emerged as a submerged version of the church. In East Germany, Czechoslovakia (and Poland), the failures and limits of the party-state's secularization policies—in very different ways—supported the growth of activities that did not conform to the party-state's policies and became increasingly oppositional.

The revolutions of 1989 were successful, at least in part, because they were based on the foundation of activism that had deep roots in people's lives. In Slovakia and the GDR, activism was rooted in participants' views of themselves and stemmed from their personal values. Many activists did not view themselves as dissidents and their stories reveal an activism that was oriented toward constructing alternatives to the status quo. Grassroots religious activity was meaningful, relevant, and in several cases, quite fun for those who engaged in it.<sup>13</sup> Aktion Sühnezeichen's summer camps, hikes in the countryside for young Slovak Catholics, bicycle rides organized by AG Umweltschutz in Leipzig, night programs for youth at pilgrimages, skits organized by AG Friedensdienst for prayer-for-peace services, cartoon strips about medieval monks in Slovak samizdat: all incorporated important intellectual programs, but also provided Slovaks and East Germans a place to act on their values and establish social relationships with others who encountered these opportunities. Service as a Bausoldat in East German military units was certainly not pleasant. But, the networks that former Bausoldaten built based on that shared commitment to peace led to the formation of social relationships that many maintain today, over two decades since the collapse of communism. Because Slovaks and East Germans felt compelled to carve out free spaces for independent activity, their work set the foundation for the politically-oriented opposition that culminated in the 1989 revolutions.

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<sup>13</sup> Padraic Kenney uses "Carnival" in his analysis of the 1989 Revolutions. Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution*.

## Epilogue

In December 1989, after the collapse of the socialist state and shortly before he was sworn in as First Deputy Prime Minister, Ján Čarnogurský explained his political position to an Austrian reporter: “I am a convinced Christian Democrat, but at the moment I do not yet belong to any party.”<sup>1</sup> On November 30, 1989, Čarnogurský, along with Anton Selecký and Hana Ponická, had signed an appeal for the formation of several Christian Democratic clubs. Čarnogurský later explained that “the representatives of these clubs will decide in a free and democratic manner whether this organization will be transformed into a Christian democratic party. If such a party is founded, I would be at its disposal.”<sup>2</sup>

The Slovak secret church and church-sponsored groups in Leipzig were social movements that formed and became active within authoritarian systems. Western theorists of civil society, examining processes of democratic transition and consolidation, have emphasized the importance of civil society in such processes and its complex relationship with other arenas of development. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan argue that civil society is one of five separate, but interacting, arenas necessary for the consolidation of democracy. They identify the other four arenas as political society, rule of law, economic society, and state bureaucracy. They explain that civil society can bring about the political change that facilitates the development of “political parties, elections, electoral rules, political leadership, interparty alliances, and legislatures”—all vital elements of political society.<sup>3</sup> In Slovakia, the pilgrimages, the petitions and the

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<sup>1</sup> “Deputy Premier Čarnogurský on Political Position,” *FBIS*, 15 December 1989, 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition*, 8. See also Szakolczai and Horváth, “The Discourse of Civil Society.”

March 25, 1988 demonstration reflect the increasing strength and boldness of the Slovak secret church during the late 1980s and its resounding contribution to the emergence of civil society on the eve of major political transformations. In Leipzig, the weekly prayer-for-peace service and the demonstrations that followed made a similar contribution that facilitated the transition to democracy in the post-Communist period.

Following the Velvet Revolution in 1989, the activists and networks of the Catholic secret church became the foundation for the new religious and political institutions in Slovakia.<sup>4</sup> The more politically-oriented members of the Catholic secret church played a role in the development of Slovakia's political society. In addition to building political parties and introducing a democratic political system, many of the leaders that emerged from the activities of the secret church continued to play an important role in Slovak politics after 1989.

Ján Čarnogurský's interest in connecting politics to Christian belief preceded the Velvet Revolution and his formal entrance into politics in December 1989. Just a few days after calling for the creation of a Christian Democratic club, on December 13, 1989, Čarnogurský, and other members of an advisory committee including Ponická, Selecký, and Ivan Hoffman signed a statement announcing the program of a Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) in Slovakia.<sup>5</sup> At its founding congress in Nitra, Slovakia, in February 1990, Čarnogurský concluded his address by linking the past activities of the secret church to the future of this new political party: "The past gave us the authority that we are qualified to build this movement. We have indeed demonstrated defiance to forty years of the ideological and political Marxist regime. We have taken part in the building and protection of the secret church. We distributed samizdat press, and together with our Czech friends we organized the pilgrimage to Velehrad in 1985, as well as the largest petition action for religious freedom in the Communist bloc three years later. In March 1988 we organized the demonstration for religious and civil rights in Bratislava. We apply the experience and strength, which we earned in that absolute struggle, to the creation of our program. If we were successful in the past, why

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<sup>4</sup> The Slovak component of the Epilogue was presented as "No Longer Secret: Slovak Catholics after 1989... Mission Accomplished?" at the national conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies in Boston on November 13, 1989. I appreciate the discussion feedback and comments of my fellow panelists: Edward Snajdr, Jonathan Larson, and Krista Harper.

<sup>5</sup> "Programové vyhlásenie Kresťankodemokratického Hnutia," *Kresťanske obzory* 1–2 (1990): 8–10.

not be the same in the future?"<sup>6</sup> In addition to drawing on the tradition of activism and defiance demonstrated by the secret church in founding KDH, Čarnogurský also brought several of the secret church's most politically-oriented members, such as Mikloško, into KDH's leadership. *Bratislavské listy*, the samizdat periodical that Čarnogurský had founded in the summer of 1988, continued after 1989, enjoying official status as one of KDH's main publications with the revised name *Listy*. Anton Selecký, one of the Bratislava Five, became the chief editor of *Slovenský denník*, the daily newspaper of KDH.

While Čarnogurský and other politically oriented members of the secret church shifted their interests towards the political revolution and the development of Christian Democracy in Slovakia, the majority of the secret church's members had become active in the secret church for spiritual development. Although many of these members had signed petitions, attended the March 25 demonstration and even demonstrated for Čarnogurský's release in November 1989, their interest focused primarily on religion and their ability to worship freely, which they could do after November 1989. After 1989, the spiritual leaders of the secret church replaced many of the church leaders who had enjoyed official status during the Communist period. The secret church had not only created political elites, but also religious leaders, such as bishops, priests, and laypeople who were experienced and prepared to continue their ministry after the revolution. Bishop Ján Korec, secretly ordained as a bishop in the early 1950s, became a Cardinal in Nitra; Vladimír Jukl, secretly ordained as a priest by Bishop Korec in his home in Bratislava, became the priest at St. Martin's Cathedral in Bratislava. Religious publications that had begun as samizdat, such as *Rodinné spoločenstvo*, continued to provide Slovakia's Catholics with news and information, but legally and in a much glossier format.

The different directions taken by leading members of the secret church after the success of the Velvet Revolution reveals that two different wings, one political and one religious, had existed within the Slovak secret church. The formation of HOS in 1988 had provided an arena where the Slovak secret church's more politically-oriented members could find an outlet to express their interests. Following the Velvet Revolution, the divisions between religion and politics became much clearer. The secret church's youth movement experienced this division. Within the secret church, Silvester Krčméry and Vladimír Jukl organized a variety of

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<sup>6</sup> Čarnogurský, *Videné od Dunaja*, 220.

courses, spiritual exercises, as well as summer and winter camps for Slovakia's Catholic youth in the 1970s and 1980s. With the collapse of Communism, about fifteen Christian youth who had been active in the secret church's movement for youth in Bratislava, testing the waters of freedom, reorganized themselves into a new group in the official sphere. Andrea Kuhajdová, at that time an eighteen-year-old student in Bratislava, was one of its founding members and explained that they began to expand out of Bratislava by establishing contact with similar groups from the secret church in Košice. As the movement grew in the first couple of months, differences within the movement also surfaced, eventually leading to a split into two separate orientations in the spring of 1990. This split was also along political and religious lines. The more politically-oriented members of the movement founded the Christian Democratic Youth of Slovakia, a movement aligned with KDH and working to encourage and coordinate the participation of Christian youth in local politics. The more religiously-oriented members founded the Movement of the Christian Community of Youth that emphasized the spiritual development of its members and organized cultural activities, sporting events, hikes, etc.<sup>7</sup>

Čarnogurský's KDH and the traditions of resistance of the Slovak secret church continued to play an important role in Slovakia's political development in the 1990s. In 1991, Čarnogurský became the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, the highest office at the state level. In the summer of 1992, political power in Slovakia shifted into the hands of Vladimír Mečiar and his nationalist Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS). As Prime Minister, Mečiar promoted Czechoslovakia's peaceful break up in what became known as the Velvet Divorce, which took effect on January 1, 1993. As an element of Slovakia's political opposition to Mečiar's increasingly authoritarian rule, Čarnogurský's KDH continued to work as a leading proponent of democratic ideals and civil rights in Slovakia. In 1997 KDH and four other opposition parties formed the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK). The program of the SDK focused on many new issues, such as fair privatization, proposals regarding housing shortages and job opportunities, organized crime and EU and NATO entry.

Using the methods of activism practiced by the Slovak secret church in the 1980s, an active civil society has had a significant impact on the restoration of democratic values and principles in Slovakia. On March 25, 1998, the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the candlelight demonstration for religious freedom in Bratislava, 30,000 people demonstrated in front of the Na-

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<sup>7</sup> Kuhajdová, interview.

tional Theater in Bratislava against Mečiar's authoritarian approach to politics. This demonstration also marked the beginning of a petition drive organized by the SDK to gather the 100,000 signatures required for a petition to be submitted to the Parliament demanding that the President be elected by direct popular vote. Former Slovak President Michal Kováč, head of the petition drive, told the demonstrators, "We now have freedom of religion and of assembly, but we have to face intolerance and malice [from the current political leadership.]"<sup>8</sup> On May 12, the petition and boxes with over 400,000 signatures supporting the petition were submitted to the Slovak Parliament.<sup>9</sup> Mečiar's HZDS won the most votes as a single party in the September 25–26, 1998 parliamentary elections, but he did not have enough support to form a new government.<sup>10</sup> On October 30, the newly elected parliament appointed Mikuláš Dzurinda, the leader of the SDK (later the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union, SDKÚ) and a former member of KDH, as the new Prime Minister.<sup>11</sup>

The 1998 petition drive and demonstration reflect a convergence of civil and political society in Slovakia. During the communist period, the secret church's success with petitions and the March 25, 1988 demonstration came from its ability to mobilize fellow citizens, even non-Catholics, to support its demands. After 1989, the possibility of political change occurring through the work of civil society increased significantly. Grzegorz Ekiert and Jan Kubik, in their analysis of protests in the post-Communist period in Poland and other East European countries, argue that protests initiated by civil society were most effective when they were coordinated with and supported by political society. As evidence, Ekiert and Kubik cite a 1993 protest in Poland where the Solidarity trade union initiated protests against the economic policies of the government. The campaign succeeded because the massive protests of civil society received support from post-Solidarity parties (political society) who simultaneously introduced a vote of no confidence in the government.<sup>12</sup> Although Mečiar's government rejected the petition in 1998, civil society and political society continued to work together to find alternatives to the Mečiar government prior to the September elections that put the SDK coalition in power.

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<sup>8</sup> "Kováč to Head Slovak Opposition Petition," *RFE/RL Newswire*, 24 March 1998 and

"Mass Protest Demonstration in Bratislava," *RFE/RL Newswire*, 26 March 1998.

<sup>9</sup> "Slovak Speaker Refuses to Accept Petition," *RFE/RL Newswire*, 14 May 1998.

<sup>10</sup> "Slovakia Opts for Political Change," *RFE/RL Newswire*, 28 September 1998.

<sup>11</sup> "Dzurinda Appointed Slovak Premier," *RFE/RL Newswire*, 30 October 1998.

<sup>12</sup> Ekiert and Kubik, *Rebellious Civil Society*, 139.

The political activities of KDH, Čarnogurský and Mikloško in the period from 1989 to 1998 illustrates that the secret church had functioned as a training ground for political activism during the transition period. The symbols of the secret church were used effectively to support the political opposition to Mečiar. However, as a social movement, the secret church had really ceased to exist, primarily because its goal of religious freedom had been achieved after the Velvet Revolution. Though no longer visible as a social movement, the secret church's most activist former members continued political engagement (often in opposition) to authoritarianism. After 1998, the activist personalities and tactics of the pre-1989 secret church continued to surface. However, there is little evidence of any sort of a Catholic or even religious-based social movement. Even the political opposition to Mečiar's government until 1998 had largely come from opposition parties that were part of political society, rather than from civil society.

The political work of Ján Čarnogurský and František Mikloško continued after 1998 and they continued to draw on their secret church credentials. Čarnogurský served as Minister of Justice within Dzurinda's government after 1998, before he withdrew to private practice in the new millennium. In 2006 he returned to KDH's board.<sup>13</sup> In 2008, František Mikloško broke away from KDH to help form a new political party, the Conservative Democrats of Slovakia (KDS). On July 29, 2008, KDS announced that Mikloško would be the KDS candidate in the 2009 presidential elections. KDS party leader Vladimír Palko emphasized Mikloško's activism in the secret church before 1989, his role in the revolution and his opposition to Mečiarism as important credentials as a presidential candidate, explaining "The Slovak president should be a man with a life story and we have not yet had anyone like that."<sup>14</sup> On March 25, 2009—four days after the first round of voting in the presidential elections—he helped commemorate the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the candlelight demonstration in Bratislava. There does not appear to have been much of a 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration of the event, though a monument had been built in the square. Attendance reported in the papers was in the hundreds (rather than the thousands who had attended the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> "Ján Čarnogurský returns to politics," *The Slovak Spectator*, 23 October 2006, online at <http://www.spectator.sk>.

<sup>14</sup> "Mikloško is KDS presidential candidate," *The Slovak Spectator*, 29 July 2008, online at <http://www.spectator.sk>.

<sup>15</sup> "'88 Candle Demonstration remembered," *The Slovak Spectator*, 30 March 2009; online at <http://www.spectator.sk>.



The 2009 presidential campaign exposed tensions between KDH and KDS, and revealed that the boundaries between church (as in Catholic Church) and state could be very murky. When KDH endorsed SDKÚ candidate Iveta Radičová (a former spokesperson of Public Against Violence), several Catholic priests in Bratislava published an open letter on a pro-Mikloško website to KDH asking it to distance itself from “a liberal candidate who advocates stances opposing the Lord’s laws and Christian morals” to instead support Mikloško as a candidate with clear Christian positions. Bishop Rudolf Baláž (diocese of Banská Bystrica) denounced Radičová for her refusal to support an absolute ban on abortions. The Assistant Bishop of the Spiš diocese also published a statement of support for Mikloško. All statements of support from Church officials generated public concerns that the Catholic Church was crossing the boundary in church-state relations by appearing to endorse a political candidate before an election. A spokesperson for the Conference of Bishops of Slovakia told *The Slovak Spectator* that bishops and priests had the “right to express their opinions as citizens.”<sup>16</sup> Mikloško was eliminated in the first round of the election (coming in third with 5.4% of the votes); Radičová, who came in second with 38% to Ivan Gašparovič’s (Smer-SD) 46.7% , advanced to the second round where she was defeated by Gašparovič 55.5% to 44.5%. Radičová served as Prime Minister from 2010 to 2012.

While Čarnogurský played a greater role in political society in the first decade after the Velvet Revolution, Mikloško supplanted that position in the second. For both individuals, the symbols and heritage of their political activism in the secret church, which helped establish their political credentials, were frequently summoned. The fragmentation of the Communist-era oppositional movements continued after 1989 with Mikloško’s split from KDH to form his new Conservative Democratic Party. While KDH never succeeded in gaining broader electoral support in the 1990s, it continued as a steady advocate for broader civil liberties and political freedoms and in coalition with other political parties in response to Mečiar’s authoritarianism.

František Mikloško’s political trajectory in the new millennium instead reflects a greater conservatism and a narrower perspective regarding the application of equal liberties and freedoms. The Slovak Parliament’s passage of an amendment to the church registration requirements in 2007 reveals that the terms of religious freedom have not remained equal to all

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<sup>16</sup> Euba Lesná, “Election heats up after ecclesiastical intervention,” *The Slovak Spectator*, 9 March 2009; online at <http://www.spectator.sk>.

believers. The debates that emerged following the introduction of the amendment raise questions about the relationship between church and state, specifically the state's role in determining which churches are appropriate for Slovaks. Ironically, there has been no organized opposition from the pre-1989 advocates of religious freedom in Slovakia and František Mikloško voted for the amendment as a member of parliament.

Prior to 2007, a religious institution could be registered by the state after submitting the names of 20,000 supporters who were permanent residents. A supporter was not required to be a member of that faith; rather someone who simply supported religious freedom. A September 14, 2007 US State Department Report explains the significance of registration: "Registration of religious groups is not required, but only registered religious groups have the legal right to build places of worship and conduct public worship services and other activities. Those that register receive government benefits, including subsidies for clergymen; office expenses; the right to visit, proselytize, and minister to their members in prisons and hospitals; and access to public television broadcasting—privileges which unregistered religious groups do not receive."<sup>17</sup> The 2007 amendment made it more difficult for an institution to gain registration status by requiring that the 20,000 signatures come from permanent residents of Slovakia and members, rather than supporters, of the religious institution. The introduction of the amendment appears to be a reaction against the growth of smaller faiths in Slovakia, most notably a Muslim student population in Bratislava.<sup>18</sup> The Mormons, who have a pre-1989 presence in Slovakia, launched an aggressive membership campaign in September 2006 before the registration amendment was introduced and submitted 33,000 signatures of supporters to receive registration status in October 2006.<sup>19</sup>

The 1992 Church Registration Act (192/1992) that the 2007 amendment revised had been submitted by (and bears the names of) František

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<sup>17</sup> U.S. State-Dept-International Religious Freedom Report 2007 (Slovak Republic), 14 September 2007; online at <http://religionandpolicy.org>.

<sup>18</sup> An August 2009 article by Lubomir Martin Ondrasek focuses on the registration issue and is the best scholarly secondary source available on this issue. Ondrasek outlines the legal provisions for religious freedom introduced after 1989 and the context for the 2007 Amendment. He summarizes the arguments by its supporters, most notably František Mikloško, whom Ondrasek interviewed. The article contains the only position statements made by Mikloško on this amendment I could locate. Ondrasek, "On Religious Freedom," 2–3.

<sup>19</sup> Stefan M. Hogan, "Young Men in White Shirts," *The Slovak Spectator*; 8 October 2007; online at <http://www.spectator.sk>.

Mikloško and Ján Čarnogurský.<sup>20</sup> In an August 2009 article evaluating religious freedom in Slovakia in the last two decades, Lubomir Martin Ondrasek discusses an interview he conducted with František Mikloško who explained his support for the 2007 amendment. According to Ondrasek, Mikloško was more than a supporter of the amendment; he “was one of the key players who contributed to framing the restrictive legislation.”<sup>21</sup> Ondrasek summarizes Mikloško’s reasons for supporting the amendment into four categories. First, Mikloško felt the revised law helped maintain the traditional religious environment. Churches without historic roots in Slovakia “should prove their viability and contribution to society before being granted registration. Second, he took the paternalistic stance that it is “difficult for people to distinguish between a legitimate religious community and a destructive sect.” Therefore the state (and political parties) has a responsibility to protect its citizens. Third, while acknowledging that the new law is discriminatory, Mikloško argued that the law did not violate human rights or constitute religious persecution. Finally, since subsidies are provided by the state, the state can decide who should receive subsidies. Ondrasek also summarizes the position of the Catholic Bishops’ Council, “The State does not put any restrictions on religious freedom and if it decides, for some good reason, to show preferable treatment to some of the churches, it is its prerogative.”<sup>22</sup>

At the heart of the 2007 registration amendment is the relationship between church and state. While elements within political society and the Catholic Church argue that church and state are separate, the premise of church registration (which grants subsidies to approved churches to support proselytizing) puts registered churches into the position of being dependent on the state. As Ondrasek argues, as long as state subsidies to churches exist, they can never be truly free and independent.

While the peaceful breakup of Czechoslovakia and the creation of an independent Slovakia in 1993 shaped that country’s transition to democracy, the GDR’s transition to democracy was facilitated by the reunification of the two Germanys on October 3, 1990. The Evangelical Church, pastors, and church-based groups that had contributed to the construction of civil society prior to the collapse of Communism continued to play a crucial role in the final months of the GDR and in the reunified Germany.

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<sup>20</sup> 192/1992 (Digest) Act of the Slovak National Council on Registration of Churches and Religious Societies, March 26, 1992.

<sup>21</sup> Ondrasek, 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 2–3.

As in Slovakia, they not only continued to contribute to the growth of civil society, but also to the development of political society.

Before the GDR's first free elections in March 1990, church leaders facilitated the transfer of power from the Communist leadership by serving in many of the local and regional roundtables organized throughout the country. Over a dozen roundtables had been created between December 1989 and January 1990 in cities such as Leipzig, Dessau, Cottbus, and Greifswald. At these local roundtables, like the central roundtable that had been established in East Berlin, church leaders served as moderators between representatives of the outgoing Communist leadership, representatives of new political organizations such as New Forum and Democratic Awakening, and representatives of local groups and initiatives. Superintendent Magirius, Superintendent Richter, and an official from the Catholic Church took turns moderating Leipzig's roundtable, which began meeting in Leipzig's new town hall in mid-January 1990. Between January and May, this roundtable established twenty-four committees to tackle issues ranging from the city's financial deficit to the question of what to do with the property and materials that had been confiscated from the SED and the Stasi in the city.<sup>23</sup>

The role of church leaders as moderators at the roundtables does not represent a substantial shift from the mediating role between state and the church-based groups that many church leaders had occupied prior to the revolution in 1989. Though engaged in the political transition, these church leaders, at least in theory, occupied a neutral position not affiliated with a particular political party or group. However, the leadership of many of the new political parties founded in the fall of 1989 included prominent pastors. Perhaps the most notable example at the national level was Pastor Rainer Eppelmann from the Samaritan Church in East Berlin. In the March 1990 election, Eppelmann, a first generation Bausoldat and prominent peace activist, won election to the East German parliament and became the Minister of Disarmament and Defense in the GDR.<sup>24</sup> Eighteen additional pastors were elected to positions in the East German parliament and four of them, including Eppelmann, held cabinet posts in the government.<sup>25</sup> An even greater number of pastors and theologians won local

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<sup>23</sup> Winter, *Die Moderatoren der Runden Tische*, 144–147.

<sup>24</sup> “GDR Minister Bids Farewell To His Former Congregation,” *LWI*, 26 July 1990 and “Eppelmann: Disarmament and Defense Are Not Mutually Exclusive,” *LWI*, 12 July 1990.

<sup>25</sup> Udo Hahn, “From Pastor to People's Representative,” *LWI*, 30 August 1990. An earlier article put the number of pastors and theologians in national politics at twenty-four. “GDR has 24 Theologians in Parliament, Four Pastors in Government,” *LWI*, 10 May

government positions in the May 1990 elections. Forty-five pastors from the Landeskirche of Saxony were elected to political office during these elections and the number was similar in the other seven Landeskirche.<sup>26</sup> In Leipzig, this included Superintendent Magirius who, after finishing his work as moderator of the roundtable, won the Presidency of Leipzig's town council and served in this position until 1994. Several years earlier, in May 1990, Magirius had even been suggested, along with two other church leaders, to be president of the GDR.<sup>27</sup>

The election of pastors and theologians to political office in the GDR became a controversial issue among peace activists and many church leaders. New laws removed a focus on Marxism-Leninism and military training from school curriculum, aspects of socialism that the church had opposed prior to 1989.<sup>28</sup> In addition, new legislation replaced Bau-soldaten service with social (community) service as an alternative to armed military service in the spring of 1990. Despite these achievements, many peace activists in the GDR criticized Eppelmann for his unwillingness to pursue the complete disarmament of the GDR.<sup>29</sup> Eppelmann defended his position by arguing that disarmament would create a military vacuum that would threaten the stability of the GDR.<sup>30</sup> Church leaders addressed the concern that many church vacancies had been created with the departure of pastors for political office. Harald Bretschneider, youth pastor of the Landeskirche of Saxony, argued that pastors should remain separate from politics and instead serve in a "watchdog" role within society. He also expressed concern that the involvement of pastors in politics would lead East Germans to distrust the church.<sup>31</sup>

In Leipzig, however, with the exception of Superintendent Magirius, none of the pastors who had been actively engaged with independent ac-

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1990. For a description of three of pastors with cabinet posts in the new government see "DDR: Drei Evangelische Pfarren in neuer Regierung," *Kathpress News Agency*, 11 April 1990.

<sup>26</sup> "Viele Pfarrer in der Politik," *LWI*, 29 November 1990.

<sup>27</sup> "East German Bishop Declines Proposal That He Be President," *Ecumenical Press Service (EPS)*, 16–20 May 1990.

<sup>28</sup> "William Downey, "Little-Noticed DDR Changes," *EPS*, 6–15 January 1990.

<sup>29</sup> "Renewed Criticism Aimed At GDR Minister Eppelmann," *LWI*, 12 July 1990.

<sup>30</sup> "Eppelmann: Disarmament and Defense Are Not Mutually Exclusive," *LWI*, 12 July 1990.

<sup>31</sup> Udo Hahn, "From Pastor to People's Representative," *LWI*, 30 August 1990. Several pastors who entered politics received leaves of absence from their congregations. "East Berlin Church Hopes for Return of Politician Pastors," *LWI*, 17 May 1990.

tivity sought political office after 1989.<sup>32</sup> Wolfgang Gröger remained a pastor in one of Leipzig's suburbs. Pastor Wonneberger, one of the GDR's most politically-oriented pastors in the 1980s, suffered a stroke during the revolution in the fall of 1989. After several years in rehabilitation, he went into retirement in Leipzig. Superintendent Richter also entered retirement in the early 1990s. Only Christian Führer, still the pastor of the Nikolaikirche in Leipzig, has continued to address international, national, and local issues outside of elected office. Under his leadership, the weekly prayer-for-peace services at the Nikolaikirche continued into the new millennium. Pastor Führer also organized and supported many other peace activities in Leipzig. After the September 11, 2001 World Trade Center attacks, organizers of the Nikolaikirche's prayer-for-peace services denounced terrorism, but a few weeks later expressed criticism of the United State's bombing of Afghanistan in October and November 2001.<sup>33</sup> During my interview with Pastor Führer in early 2001, he told me of his disappointment that German President Johannes Rau, a practicing Lutheran, had used the occasion of a speech in the Nikolaikirche commemorating the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October 9, 1989 demonstration to speak in support of military efforts against the Taliban in Afghanistan.<sup>34</sup>

The church-based groups that had developed prior to the fall of 1989 contributed to the development of both civil society and political society during the transition period. This dual role is clearly evident in the different paths taken by AG Friedensdienst's members since 1989. In 1990, two of its members, Karl Kamilli and Brigitte Moritz, entered politics. Kamilli helped found the Social Democratic Party in 1990 and Moritz served with the transitional roundtable body in Leipzig and later won an elected position with the Alliance 90/The Greens (Bündnis 90/Grüne) party.

AG Friedensdienst remained an active part of civil society in Leipzig in the 1990s and early 2000s. Helmut Wolff and Helmut Nitzsche continue to meet to discuss peace issues. In November 2001, Wolff and Nitzsche, along with their wives and a handful of other former members of AG Friedensdienst, led a prayer-for-peace service during the Friedensdekade at the Nikolaikirche. Though the issues have shifted from the cold

<sup>32</sup> Hans-Wilhelm Ebeling, pastor of the Thomaskirche in Leipzig from 1976 to 1989, won election to the East German Parliament in 1990. "More Pastors in DDR Government," *EPS*, 1–10 May 1990. Ebeling had not been notably engaged with Leipzig's groups or opposition activity prior to 1989.

<sup>33</sup> Most of the prayer-for-peace services that I attended at the Nikolaikirche in October and November 2001 opposed terrorism and the war in Afghanistan.

<sup>34</sup> Führer, interview.

war arms race to the war on terror, the group's commitment to promoting peace remains as focused as it had been twenty years earlier when they led the first prayer-for-peace services during the Friedensdekade in 1981.

Like the Catholic Church in Slovakia and Poland, one of the biggest difficulties the Evangelical Church faced after 1989 was coming to terms with its role in a free and democratic society. In February 1990, an East Berlin superintendent explained: "We are no longer the island where people can find freedom. We are only one among equal groups." The article carrying this statement reported that church attendance had dropped, seminary students were switching to other fields of study, and enrollment in Christian education classes had already declined.<sup>35</sup> Under Communism, the Evangelical Church had become a substitute for many other aspects of life, more than just a place for worship. The decline in numbers in these areas after 1989 indicates that the church no longer maintained this broader function. In April 1990 a news article reported that the Evangelical Church's periodicals had become available in public kiosks. This distribution outlet had been unavailable to the church under Communism.<sup>36</sup> Eight months later, the same news organization reported that church publications were struggling to survive financially in the new environment of post-Communism.<sup>37</sup> In June 1991, the eight East German Landeskirchen reunited with the West German Evangelical Church (EKD), following the model of East Germany's political merger into the West German political system.<sup>38</sup>

The suggestion of German reunification had surfaced dramatically with the chanting of "We Are One People!" during the demonstrations in Leipzig in the fall of 1989. In the first days after the revolution, Pastor Eppelmann presented his views on the issue to a reporter from the *Christian Science Monitor*: "We must find a third way here between socialism and capitalism... the next six months are crucial. Either we get a solid democracy established here or we will be strangled by West Germany."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> "Members Decrease as Churches in GDR Take Leading Role," *LWI*, 1 February 1990. Christian Führer made a similar prediction about the decline of the Evangelical Church's importance in an article profiling Rainer Eppelmann. William Echikson, "A Pastor With a Political Mission," *Christian Science Monitor*, 29 December 1989–4 January 1990, 14.

<sup>36</sup> "GDR Church Magazines Now Available at Kiosks," *LWI*, 12 April 1990.

<sup>37</sup> "Former GDR Church Newspapers Struggle to Survive," *LWI*, 20 December 1990.

<sup>38</sup> "German Churches Agree on Legal Basis for Unity," *LWI*, 21 March 1991; "Unity of German Protestant Church Sealed," *LWI*, 11 July 1991.

<sup>39</sup> William Echikson, "A Pastor With A Political Mission." *Christian Science Monitor*, 29 December 1989–4 January 1990, 14.

In March 1991, one year after the first free elections in the GDR, 100,000 people demonstrated in Leipzig against Helmut Kohl and rising unemployment in the city. One trade union official told a reporter from the *Guardian* newspaper: "Unemployment here could rise to fifty percent. That's an entire people without work. We didn't go on the streets in the autumn of 1989 or vote for German unity for this. We will not allow ourselves to become second-class Germans."<sup>40</sup> Jennifer A. Yoder's analysis of post-communist elites in the GDR offers an explanation as to why the path of a third way proposed by Eppelmann and others did not succeed. She argues that grassroots activists and groups that had initiated the revolution and mobilized the East German population in the fall of 1989 had failed to develop a vision for a post-Communist GDR. She argues that already in the winter of 1989 and 1990, the real force behind the GDR's transition had shifted to West German parties and institutions that pursued the western vision of reunification.<sup>41</sup> Based on Yoder's analysis, it appears that the political society that emerged after the East German Revolution had not been strong enough or prepared to articulate its view of a third way, particularly in the face of West German economic and political strength.

East Germany, through reunification, did not follow the authoritarian path that Slovakia took under Vladimír Mečiar, but the speed of the reunification process prevented many of the values and ideals that had existed within both East German civil society and political society from being fully articulated. In both cases, the speed of the transition prevented civil society and political society from developing fully in time to respond to the challenges presented by the Velvet Divorce and Reunification.

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<sup>40</sup> David Gow, "East Germans Jeer Kohl Promises," *The Guardian*, 19 March 1991, 24.

<sup>41</sup> Yoder, *From East Germans to Germans?* 70–71.



# Glossary

**Aktion Sühnezeichen** (Action Signs of Reconciliation): Church-based organization founded by Lothar Kreyssig in the GDR in 1958. A former member of the Confessing Church, Kreyssig argued that Germans had a responsibility to atone for Nazi crimes not only through their words, but also through their actions. He envisioned young people dedicating their time and energy to rebuild schools, hospitals, etc., destroyed by the Nazis. With the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, Aktion Sühnezeichen split into two administrative units. Aktion Sühnezeichen/Friedensdienst carried out this mission in the West and coordinated the work of young people in West Germany, the Netherlands, France, and Israel. Aktion Sühnezeichen in the GDR organized two-week summer camps for young adults, first in the GDR, and later in Poland and Czechoslovakia.

**Arbeitsgruppe Friedensdienst** (Working Group in the Service of Peace; also referred to as Arbeitskreis Friedensdienst, Arbeitsgemeinschaft Friedensdienst or simply AGF by its members): Leipzig peace group founded by former Bausoldaten that received sponsorship from the Jugendpfarramt in 1981. From 1985 to 1989 the Regional Synodical Committee sponsored the group's work in Leipzig. AGF introduced the first prayer-for-peace services at the Nikolaikirche and organized Leipzig's peace seminar until 1985. Its active membership remained between fifteen and twenty people, including several women and men who had not served as Bausoldaten.

**Arbeitsgruppe Umweltschutz** (Working Group Environmental Protection; also referred to as AGU): Environmental group in Leipzig founded by theology students in 1981. Sponsored by the Jugendpfarramt, AGU published a monthly periodical named *Streiflichter* and organized a wide range of environmental activities in Leipzig until 1989.

In 1988, its members opened an environmental library and office at the Jugendpfarramt in Leipzig.

**Arbeitskreis Gerechtigkeit** (Working Group for Justice): Leipzig group founded by students at Leipzig's theological seminary in 1987 and sponsored by Pastor Christoph Wonneberger. This group hoped to directly influence the GDR's political development. In contrast to most of Leipzig's church-based groups, AK Gerechtigkeit was a closed group and restricted attendance at its meetings to members.

**Barmen Theological Declaration:** Formulated by Swiss Theologian Karl Barth in 1934, this declaration rejected Martin Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms and asserted that Christians had a responsibility to resist any government that acted against the will of God. Barth was responding to the rise of Adolf Hitler and the National Socialism in Germany. This declaration inspired the foundation of the Confessing Church that resisted Nazi policies until 1945.

**Bausoldaten** (construction soldiers): East German conscientious objectors who fulfilled military service obligations by serving in unarmed construction units within the National People's Army. The party-state introduced this alternative to armed military service in 1964, two years after it introduced compulsory conscription in 1962. Through this service option, East Germany became the only Soviet-bloc state to offer a legal alternative to armed military service.

**Berlin Appeal:** Petition for disarmament initiated in the GDR by East German pastor Rainer Eppelmann and physicist Robert Havemann in 1982. Over 2,000 East Germans signed this document and a few pastors read it from their pulpits.

**Bezirkssynodalausschuß** (Regional Synodical Committee): Committee organized by Superintendent Friedrich Magirus in Leipzig in 1985 to coordinate the activities of the many different church-based groups that existed in the city. Representatives of each group met once a month to discuss their work and future activities. This committee also determined the themes of the weekly prayer-for-peace services and assigned responsibility for leading the services to the groups. It became an important church sponsor for many of Leipzig's groups. The committee focused on promoting the themes of peace, justice, and environmental protection. Magirus, inspired by the ecumenical conciliar process which East German representatives at the World Council of Church's congress had introduced in 1983, included Catholic groups in Leipzig in this committee.

**Bratislava's Good Friday:** Name given by Slovak Catholics to the March 25, 1988 demonstration in Bratislava that activists in the secret church had organized to demand greater respect for religious and civil rights in Slovakia. Though the state banned the demonstration, an estimated 2,000 people gathered with candles in Hviezdoslav Square at 6:00 p.m. The police broke up this demonstration with water cannon and by driving vehicles through the square. It represented the first independent demonstration in Bratislava since 1968.

**Bratislavské listy** (Bratislava Letters): Politically-oriented religious samizdat publication founded by Ján Čarnogurský in Bratislava in 1988. After 1989, Čarnogurský's Christian Democratic Movement continued to publish this periodical, though changing its name to *Listy*.

**Charter 77:** Independent human rights organization founded in Czechoslovakia on January 1, 1977 by 239 individuals who signed its founding declaration. Charter 77, largely through letters and petitions, worked to ensure that the Czechoslovak state adhered to existing guarantees of human rights in the Czechoslovak Constitution and international agreements such as the Helsinki Final Act and the UN Charter. The majority of Charter 77's members resided in the Czech lands.

**Civic Forum:** Organization founded by opposition leaders in the Czech lands shortly after the start of the Velvet Revolution in November 1989. Under the leadership of Václav Havel, Civic Forum introduced a program of political reform and negotiated the transition of power out of the hands of the Communist leadership.

**Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted:** Committee founded by opposition leaders in Czechoslovakia in 1978 to offer legal and financial support to individuals persecuted by the Communist authorities for their beliefs.

**Conciliar Process** (Konziliarer Prozeß): Ecumenical movement to promote peace, justice, and the preservation of creation (environmental protection) adopted at the World Council of Church's conference in Vancouver in 1983. In preparation for a conference in 1990 that would address these three themes, East German church leaders supported activities that supported and explored these themes in greater detail.

**Conference of the Eastern Church:** Body of East German Evangelical Church leaders with representatives from each of the eight Landeskirche in the GDR. This organization, established prior to the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, represented the East German Landeskirche's institutional link with the all-German Evangelical Church of Germany. It continued to facilitate the ties between the

Evangelical churches in the two Germanies until the formation of the Federation of Evangelical Churches in the GDR (Kirchenbund) in 1969 severed this relationship.

**Confessing Church** (Bekennende Kirche): Founded in 1934, after the Barmen Theological Declaration, in resistance to Nazi efforts to coordinate the activities of the church. While some pastors in the Confessing Church (such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer) articulated total resistance to all Nazi policies, other members simply opposed Nazi policies that infringed upon the ministry of the church. Approximately 6,000 clergy belonged to the Confessing Church between 1934 and 1945. The Nazis arrested many members by 1941, but many who survived the war stepped into positions of leadership within the reestablished postwar church.

**Czech lands:** The regions of Bohemia and Moravia in the former Czechoslovakia. Today this area constitutes the Czech Republic.

**Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms:** Developed by Martin Luther and articulated the view that the world was divided into temporal and spiritual kingdoms. Christians were to submit to God regarding spiritual matters, but also to worldly authority in the temporal kingdom. Basically, Luther viewed the state as a source of order that the church, regardless of the nature of state policies, needed for its evangelization efforts. This doctrine was a response to the convergence of church and state in sixteenth century Germany, but by the twentieth century had become the basis for Lutheran passivity to state policies. Though the Barmen Theological Declaration offered rejection of this doctrine in 1934 and inspired the formation of the Confessing Church, it is unclear how many Pastors or Lutherans continued to maintain Luther's view of the relationship between church and state.

**Federation of the Evangelical Churches in the GDR** (Kirchenbund): This church federation consists of the eight East German Landeskirche. It was formed in 1969 when these Landeskirche severed their formal ties with the EKD in West Germany. A Bishop, elected by representatives from each of the Landeskirche, served as the head of the Kirchenbund. The Kirchenbund dissolved in 1991 and the eight Landeskirche were reincorporated into the Evangelical Church of Germany.

**Frauen für den Frieden** (Women for Peace): Church-based peace group in Leipzig founded in 1984 by women interested in advancing peace work within schools and the family. While Leipzig's group had no more than fifteen active members, other Frauen für den Frieden groups

existed elsewhere in the GDR, including East Berlin where this women's initiative had first begun.

**Friedensdekade** ("Ten Days of Peace" or "Peace Week"): Annual peace event every November promoted by the Kirchenbund to advocate for peace and disarmament in Europe. Harald Bretschneider, youth pastor of the Landeskirche of Saxony, developed the motto "Make Peace without Weapons" for the first Friedensdekade held November 9–19, 1980. He also created a bookmark for the event with the Swords into Ploughshares symbol, which became an important emblem of peace activists in the GDR. The initiative of church-based groups at the local level determined the nature and extent of activities in a given town or city during each Friedensdekade. The ten-day Friedensdekade event is still celebrated every year in Germany.

**Hnutí za občiansku slobodu** (Movement for Civic Freedoms, or HOS): Opposition movement founded in 1988 by members of the political opposition in the Czech lands and Slovakia. While much of its membership in the Czech Lands came from Charter 77, HOS was distinct from Charter 77 in several respects. Rather than demanding adherence to existing rights guaranteed in the Czechoslovak constitution and international agreements, HOS introduced a multi-faceted program of political reform. Also, while much of Charter 77's membership lived in Prague, HOS had a greater Czecho-Slovak character, with contacts in Brno and Bratislava (including Catholic activists from the secret church such as Ján Čarnogurský, Anton Selecký, and Juraj Kohutiar).

**Initiativegruppe Leben** (Initiative Group for Life): Church-based group in Leipzig founded in the summer of 1987 by several of AG Umweltschutz's more politically-oriented members. Its thirty members connected ecological demands with political reforms and addressed a broad range of social and political issues such as ecology, Ceaușescu's policies in Romania, military service questions, civil rights and perestroika. This group had a relatively loose association with the Evangelical Church and many of its meetings took place in private apartments.

**Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter (IM)** (informal or unofficial collaborator of the Stasi): Individuals in the GDR who secretly worked for the Stasi and reported on the activities of citizens, groups, organizations, etc. IM successfully infiltrated several of Leipzig's church-based groups or occupied positions within the church leadership.

**Jazz Section:** Branch of the Union of Musicians in Czechoslovakia. It took advantage of its official status to publish and distribute an uncensored bulletin for its members in the 1980s.

**Jugendpfarramt:** Local youth parish offices that coordinated the Evangelical Church's youth ministry in a given town or city in Germany. In Leipzig, Pastor Wolfgang Gröger served as youth pastor for the Jugendpfarramt from 1981 to 1987. Pastor Klaus Kaden replaced him in 1987 and headed this ministry until 1990. Leipzig's Jugendpfarramt sponsored several groups in the 1980s, including AG Friedensdienst and AG Umweltschutz. The Jugendpfarramt had its own office in the center of Leipzig, thus providing a space where the group members could meet and resources, such as a printing press, that the groups could use to publish newsletters to publicize their activities.

**Jugendweihe** (youth consecration): State-sponsored after school educational program introduced in the GDR in 1954. Program designed to produce new generations of East Germans dedicated to building the goals of socialism. Following its introduction, the Evangelical Church criticized the Jugendweihe because it represented a civic (and non-religious) alternative to the Christian confirmation classes. The after school Jugendweihe classes also conflicted with the after school time when children traditionally met for confirmation classes.

**Kirchenbund:** See the Federation of Evangelical Churches in the GDR.

**Kirchentag:** Annual church convention or congress organized by the Evangelical Church in Germany. In addition to administrative meetings, activities included religious services, music, discussions, and performances, making it an event for all ages.

**Kirchliches Forschungsheim Wittenberg** (Church Research Center in Wittenberg): Environmental Research Center established by the Evangelical Church in the GDR in the late 1970s. This center provided environmental information and resources to many of the church-based environmental groups that existed at the local level throughout the GDR.

**Kontakte: *Frieden, Dritte-Welt und Umwelt*** (Contacts: Peace, the Third World, and the Environment): Monthly newsletter published by Leipzig's Jugendpfarramt between 1984 and 1989. Each issue contained information about the activities of the groups sponsored by the Jugendpfarramt. Brigitte Moritz, also a member of AG Friedensdienst, served as the editor of *Kontakte*.

**Landeskirche:** Administrative region of the Evangelical Church in Germany. Eight Landeskirche existed within the GDR. Each Landeskirche

elected its own Bishop. Until the formation of the Kirchenbund, the Landeskirche were linked to the EKD in West Germany through the Conference of the Eastern Church. The formation of the Kirchenbund in 1969 severed this link formally (although informal ties continued to exist). The eight Landeskirche in the GDR included: Anhalt, Berlin-Brandenburg (East), Church Province of Saxony (Magdeburg), Gorlitz, Greifswald, Mecklenburg, Saxony (Dresden), and Thuringia. Leipzig belonged to the Landeskirche of Saxony (Dresden).

**Lay Apostle Movement:** Broad lay movement of the secret church that provided for the specific spiritual needs of Slovakia's Catholics by organizing them into three different branches based on age. The Movement of Christian Education for Children consisted of communities of fourteen to eighteen-year-olds. University-aged Catholics belonged to communities in the Lay Apostle Youth Movement and parents belonged to the Movement of the Christian Family.

**Lay Apostle Youth Movement:** See Lay Apostle Movement.

**Luther Year Celebrations:** 1983 celebrations to commemorate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Martin Luther's birth. Both the Kirchenbund and the state organized committees to prepare for this celebration.

**March 6, 1978 Summit:** An important turning point for church-state relations in the GDR. SED leader Erich Honecker met with Bishop Albrecht Schönherr, the head of the Kirchenbund, in 1978. From these negotiations, the Evangelical Church, still maintaining its high degree of autonomy from the state, won several concessions including permission to construct new churches, increased access to radio and television broadcasts, and the state's promise to reduce discrimination against Christian youth. The state won international approval for granting these concessions to the Church. Because financial support from the EKD in West Germany would pay for the new churches, the GDR also benefited from this new source of hard currency.

**Mobil ohne Auto** ("Mobile without an Auto" or "car-free"): Annual bicycle protest against pollution-causing methods of transportation. A GDR-wide environmental initiative coordinated in Leipzig by AG Umweltschutz beginning in 1981.

**Movement of Christian Education for Children:** See Lay Apostle Movement.

**Movement of the Christian Family:** See Lay Apostle Movement.

***Náboženstvo a súčasnosť*** (Religion and the Present): Religious samizdat published and distributed five times a year by the secret church in Slovakia between 1982 and 1989.

**Neues Forum** (New Forum): An opposition group formed in East Berlin in early September 1989 by a group of about thirty artists and intellectuals. Among its goals was a restructuring of society through reforms from the state. In its founding appeal, New Forum demanded greater availability of goods and services and the opportunity for greater economic initiatives for East German citizens. It also sought legal status that would allow it to exist independent of the state. Unlike many earlier groups in the GDR, New Forum had no formal connection to the Evangelical Church. New Forum's membership increased dramatically in the fall of 1989.

**Nikolaikirche** (St. Nicholas Church): Lutheran Church located in the center of Leipzig. AG Friedensdienst organized the first Friedensdekade and introduced the first prayer-for-peace services at the Nikolaikirche in 1981. In September 1982, Leipzig's church-based groups made these services a weekly event and they continued throughout the 1980s.

**Pacem in Terris** ("Peace on Earth", Peace Movement of the Catholic Clergy): State-sponsored and coordinated association designed to regulate the work of Catholic priests in Czechoslovakia. Founded in 1970, it continued the work of the Peace Movement of the Catholic Clergy, which had been established in 1951 and disbanded during the Prague Spring.

**Peace Movement of the Catholic Clergy**: See Pacem in Terris.

**Pontifical Russian College of the Vatican** (Russicum): Established in 1929 by Pope Pius XI, this college prepared Roman Catholic priests for clandestine ministry in Soviet Russia.

**Public Against Violence** (Verejnost' proti násiliu): Umbrella group of Slovakia's opposition groups founded shortly after the start of the Velvet Revolution in November 1989. Like Civic Forum, Public Against Violence advanced a program of political reform and mediated the peaceful transition of power from the Communist regime in Slovakia.

**Regional Synodical Committee**: See Bezirksynodalausschuß.

**Rodina** (The Family): Underground Catholic community in Slovakia founded by Tomislav Kolaković in 1943. Members included priests and monks, but also students, women and laypeople. In terms of method and leadership, the Rodina became the foundation of the Slovak secret church.

**Rodinné spoločenstvo** (Family Communion): Slovak religious samizdat periodical published and distributed by the secret church between 1985 and 1989.



**Russicum:** See the Pontifical Russian College of the Vatican.

**Samizdat:** Literally “self-published.” Refers to newspapers, periodicals, leaflets, essays, books, etc., usually printed with mimeograph machines or typed carbon copy and distributed (often illegally) through personal contacts or informal networks.

**Socialist Unity Party** (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED): The Communist Party in the German Democratic Republic. In 1946, the Soviet backed Communist Party of Germany merged with the Social Democratic Party of Germany in the Soviet Zone to form the SED.

**Stasi:** The East German secret police. Part of the Ministry for State Security.

**Streiflichter** (Sidelight): Monthly periodical published by the environmental group AG Umweltschutz in Leipzig between 1981 and 1989 with publishing resources supplied by the Jugendpfarramt.

**Superintendent:** Ordained Evangelical minister in Germany with administrative responsibility for the churches in a church district. Because of its large size, Leipzig was divided into two districts with a superintendent for each. In the 1980s, Friedrich Magirius served as superintendent of Leipzig-East, while Johannes Richter served as superintendent of Leipzig-West.

**Swords into Ploughshares:** Slogan and graphic developed by the Kirchenbund for the first Friedensdekade in 1980. The slogan is based on a biblical verse, Micah 4, and the image of a man hammering a sword into a ploughshare is based on a statue that the Soviet Union had presented to the United Nations in 1961. Though first distributed as bookmark in 1980, East German peace activists adopted it as a symbol of their work for peace and wore it as a patch until the state banned its use outside of churches in 1982.

**31-Point Petition:** Petition with thirty-one demands for increased religious freedom in Czechoslovakia signed by an estimated 600,000 people between 1987 and 1988. Though written by a Moravian, Augustin Navrátil, the Slovak secret church mobilized its members and resources to gather signatures in support of this petition and collected over half of the total signatures in only a few months.

**Umweltbibliothek Leipzig** (Environmental Library Leipzig): In August 1988, AG Umweltschutz received permission from Leipzig’s youth pastor to establish an environmental library within Leipzig’s Jugendpfarramt. This library was open every Monday from 1:00 to 7:00 p.m. Anyone could visit the library. Roland Quester, the librarian, made an extensive variety of materials available, including *Streiflichter*

and over twenty other publications produced by church-based groups in the GDR. Other holdings included essays and reports from the Evangelical Church's environmental research library in Wittenberg, records and reports of AG Umweltschutz's initiatives in Leipzig, and even materials from Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia that had been translated into German.

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*Turning Prayers into Protests* is a comparative study of religious-based oppositional activity in Slovakia and East Germany prior to 1989.

Religion was a central arena for culture, thought, and social organization in the societies that became communist after the Second World War. It was thus a primary concern for communist regimes. The author examines the various and divergent grass-roots activism of the secret Catholic Church in Slovakia and the Lutheran Church in East Germany that confronted state socialist rule and contributed to its eventual dismantling. He compares the two cases in terms of the political power, influence and affect that these Churches had in regard to state repression or cooptation, vividly demonstrating that religion could provide a space for independence beyond state control as well as a foundation for resistance.

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